

# Jews of the Arab Countries

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Research Center  
Beirut**

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# I

## GENERAL VIEW

This short study is an exposition of Jewish life in the Arab countries of Asia and Africa, particularly during the past century.<sup>1</sup> It seeks to show that Jewish communities have led a varied existence reflecting the circumstances of the particular area in which they have lived. It seeks to show further that, though numerically few, indigenous Jews have formed an integral segment of the whole indigenous Arab population. They have participated in the general life of the greater community, speaking the same language, adhering to the same mores and living under the same economic, social and political circumstances. Such conditions have never been available to Jews throughout their long history. And whereas they have been repeatedly exposed to pogroms in Europe, they have always been able to seek refuge in the Arab world.

This volume, then, constitutes a new endeavor in the study of Jews of the Arab world especially in that all past studies represent a slanted viewpoint. The author has relied on a number of articles and on reliable information drawn from sources in Arabic and English, as well as on information available in the archives of the Palestine Liberation Organization Research Center concerning Jews of the Arab countries (1965-1970).

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(1) This study does not deal with the Jews in Palestine. To do so would require lengthy discussions of the complex problems which their advent to that country has created. The scope of this study does not permit adequate treatment of the subject.

## A. JEWISH INHABITANTS OF ARAB COUNTRIES

Most Jews in the area are descendants of immigrants from various parts of the world. The biggest wave of immigrants came in the wake of the mass exodus of Jews from Spain after the fall of the Arab rule there. They are called "Sephardim" and speak a dialect called "Ladino". A fair number of "Gorneyim" came from Italy in the seventeenth century. Gorneyim and Sephardim Jews differed from indigenous Jews mainly in that they enjoyed a higher standard of education and greater wealth. The descendants of these two groups of immigrants constituted the middle class (traders and professionals).<sup>2</sup> They continued to speak Ladino until late in the nineteenth century when they replaced it with French, like the rest of the Levantines who engaged in trade. But Arabic, the mother tongue of indigenous Jews, became a *lingua franca* among all Jews in the area.<sup>3</sup>

With the opening of the nineteenth century, particularly after the Crimean War,<sup>4</sup> the immigration of Ashkenazim Jews from Eastern Europe began. Towards the end of the century, greater numbers of Ashkenazim arrived, mostly in Palestine, where up to that time only as many as 10,000 Jews lived. These people spoke Yiddish.

The majority of Jews are Rabbinites. But there are two other sects: the Karaites and the Samaritans. The Karaites split from the main body of Jews in the eighth century. They advocate the return to the Scriptures, bypassing the Talmudic and oral traditions. The Samaritans accept only the Pentateuch.

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(2) Note further details in following sections.

(3) Landshut, *Jewish Communities in the Muslim Countries of the Middle East* (London, 1950).

(4) Note further details in following sections.

Their rites are based on Mosaic Law but they differ totally from those of other Jews. They speak Aramaic as well as Arabic. Their use of Hebrew is restricted to religious studies.

There are no exact figures as to the number of Jews in the Arab world. On the one hand, until 1948 no census was conducted in many areas. On the other, official statistics do not take into consideration the number of Jews who carry foreign passports though they reside permanently in the area. The following 1950 estimates<sup>5</sup> are probably the most accurate and they are not far from those which the Jewish Agency brought forward in its 1946 report to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Jewish Population</i>	<i>Percentage to Total Population</i>
Egypt	75,000	0.4%
Iraq	120,000	2.4%
Lebanon	6,700	0.8%
Syria	6,000	0.3%
Bahrain	400	0.4%
Hadramout	2,000	unknown
Yemen	8,000*	2.0%
Aden	1,200	2.5%
Libya	14,000*	15.0%
Tunisia	100,000	2.9%
Algeria	120,000	1.7%
Morocco	225,000	2.6%
Spanish Morocco	14,700 (1947)	21.0%
Tangiers	7,000*	2.8%

\* Figures could not be verified.

In other words, about 800,000 Jews lived in the Arab countries in 1950 or five to six percent of the total Jewish world population (16-17 million).<sup>6</sup>

### B. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Arab and Jews have the same origin. Apart from this fact, very little is known about Arab-Jewish relations in pre-Islamic days. After the rise of Islam new bases were set. Non-Muslim communities, known as *Ahl al-Thimma*,<sup>7</sup> were granted the freedom to organize their internal affairs in accordance with their particular religious laws and social customs. The religious leaders of such communities were held responsible by the Muslim authorities for the administration of their communities' internal affairs. Within this framework of relations, non-Muslim communities enjoyed not only freedom of worship, but also freedom of movement, thought, and education. After the rise of the Ottoman Empire the above mentioned system continued to operate under a new name: the *Millah* or *Millet* system.

Under such optimum conditions, the Jewish communities in the Arab world flourished.<sup>8</sup> During the Golden Age of the Arab Empire (i.e. under the Abbasid caliphate), Jewish as well as Christian men of learning contributed greatly to the sum total of Arab civilization. Jewish merchants and moneydealers occupied an important place in the economy of the capital, Baghdad.<sup>9</sup> Like other minorities within the empire,

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(6) Landshut, p. 1.

(7) I.e. Christians and Jews.

(8) See Bowen and Gibb, *Islamic Society and the West*, Vol. I, Part 2 (London, 1957).

(9) W. Khadduri, "The Jews of Iraq during the Nineteenth Century," *The Arab World* (May-June 1970), p. 10.

Jews were influenced by Arab culture. They acquired much of the Arab-Muslim way of life and Arabic became their language.<sup>10</sup>

Later and in spite of the general destruction brought on by the Tartar invasion, the conditions under which Jews lived in the Ottoman Empire were far better than those under which their co-religionists lived elsewhere in the world. For this reason, the fifteenth century witnessed a surge of European Jewish immigrants towards the Ottoman Empire dominions, particularly from Spain in 1492. An estimated 100,000 Sephardim and Marranos<sup>11</sup> settled in Turkey in addition to the large numbers who settled in North Africa, Egypt, Palestine and Syria.<sup>12</sup>

The number of Jews in the East increased manyfold and their conditions improved noticeably; for the Spanish immigrants brought with them not only a flourishing culture but also their riches. Sephardim Jews soon occupied an important position in public life. Their skills, their business contacts with foreign countries and their knowledge of languages enabled them to offer valuable services in diplomatic negotiations and private missions.<sup>13</sup>

There is, however, a reverse side to Arab-Jewish relations. "Ottoman rule in the East" says Professor Vladimir B. Lutsky,<sup>14</sup> "coincided with the revival and rapid growth of inter-

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(10) Landshut, p. 18.

(11) Spanish Jewish converts to Christianity who had remained secretly faithful to Judaism.

(12) N. Rejwan, "Why the Arabs Reject Anti-Semitism," *The New Middle East* (July 1969), p. 14 ff.

(13) Landshut, p. 14.

(14) *Modern History of the Arab Countries* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969).

national trade. European industry was in need of additional markets. It found them in the vast Ottoman Empire. Turkish and Arab feudal lords bought English and Dutch cloth, French silks and wines, Russian furs and Bohemian cut glass...

"The fatal consequences of such trade are obvious. It intensified the feudal exploitation of the peasantry and ruined the rural population... [Moreover,] the main role of this trade was played by foreign merchants..."<sup>15</sup>

One of the reasons for the predominance of Europeans in the trade of the Ottoman Empire lay in the capitulations system. "Capitulations" were certificates granting the European traders special rights and privileges. But as the Ottoman Empire weakened, the European powers began to regard the capitulations as their irrefutable rights and tried to get them extended to include their local contractors as well (pp. 18-21). The local Jewish traders who could not have competed with the Europeans, protected as they were by the system of capitulations,<sup>16</sup> began to acquire foreign passports in ever increasing numbers.

During the nineteenth century, rulers such as Mohammed Ali in Egypt, Ibrahim Pasha in Syria and Lebanon, and Daud Pasha in Iraq, tried to meet the challenge of increasing foreign influence by introducing modernizing measures. They failed because some of their reforms, such as the improved means

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(15) It should be noted that Lutsky does not place Jews in a separate category as he does the Christian Arabs. But whenever he refers to European immigrants (Greeks from Salonika, Slovans, Spaniards, etc.) he is referring mostly to Jews. Cf. previous section.

(16) Europeans paid 3 percent of the value of the product while local merchants paid 7-10 percent. European goods were taxed once at their port of entry while the merchandise of local traders was taxed everytime it was moved from one area to another.

of communications, served the interests of foreign powers and brought on direct foreign intervention.

Moreover, the growing inflow of European goods ruined the available local industries and handicrafts and impeded the growth of national manufacturing; but it strengthened foreign trade and the compradore bourgeoisie whose members often held foreign passports.

In Turkey itself, a small national bourgeoisie, mercantile in nature, was pressing for reforms. Though the reforms of the first period of Tanzimat (Hatti-Sherif Gulhane) of 1839-56 remained mostly unimplemented, they did, however, have some results. The greater consideration given to education did lead to the opening of secular secondary schools. And the guarantee of property rights to all citizens, irrespective of their religion, created the condition for bourgeois accumulation.<sup>17</sup> On the whole, however, these reforms did not undermine the backward social and political conditions (feudalism) and failed to repel the economic aggression of foreign capital.<sup>18</sup>

Missionaries and Jewish philanthropists, too, provided another means of foreign penetration in the Arab world. The Alliance Israélite Universelle opened a network of schools aimed primarily at bringing up Jewish children according to a Franco-Jewish formula. England, not lagging far behind France, encouraged Jewish colonization in Palestine.<sup>19</sup>

The second period of Tanzimat was initiated under pressure from the European powers. The Hatti-Hamayun of 1856 stressed religious equality and economic undertakings.

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(17) Lutsky, pp. 121-123.

(18) *Ibid.*, p. 126.

(19) *Ibid.*, pp. 131-32.

The European powers saw to it that their subjects and commercial agents, most of whom came from the non-Muslim merchant class, profited by the new rights granted to the non-Muslim Ottoman citizens. The European capitalists received bank, railway and other concessions, the right to buy land, and so on.<sup>20</sup>

All further attempts at carrying out the much-needed socio-economic and political reforms only played into the hands of foreign powers. Thus in Egypt, for example, the reforms of the Khedives Saïd and Ismaïl caused the financial enslavement of Egypt. The London bankers, Messrs. Fröhling, Göschen, Bishofsgein and Oppenheim entangled Egypt in a net of ruinous debts which caused the whole Egyptian economy to be "hocked" to the Big Powers.<sup>21</sup> The same pattern was repeated elsewhere particularly in North Africa as Lutsky indicates.

What made matters worse was the influx of Europeans to the area. As mentioned earlier, the exact number of Jews amongst them cannot be determined; but we know what kind of Europeans came. For example, writing about foreigners in Egypt, Lutsky says:

... Only a few of them were specialists—agronomists, mechanics, doctors, teachers, workers, people who were prepared to work. The overwhelming bulk

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(20) *Ibid.*, p. 134.

(21) In 1876 Egypt owed foreign bankers £100 million made up of the following items: £16 million was spent for the Suez Canal; £22 million, which Egypt never actually received, went to the bankers as "differences in exchange value" commissions, and so on, but were included in the nominal sum of the debt; no less than £50 million had been paid by Egypt up to 1876 as interest on the basic loans and promissory debts; £5.6 million was spent on public works (Lutsky, p. 191).



of them were parasitic elements of the worst kind such as dealers, speculators, stock-jobbers, money-lenders, smugglers, brothel owners, swindlers, thieves, corrupt journalists, prostitutes and other. Operating under the protection of the capitulations and foreign consuls, these scum of Europe, who regarded themselves as representatives of "high culture," exploited the working people of Egypt and poisoned the atmosphere in the town, especially in the beautiful town of Alexandria.... Whole blocks were turned into brothels, dens and taverns. In 1840, there were only 6,150 Europeans in Egypt, whereas by 1761, their number had risen to 80,000, 34,000 of whom were Greeks (who engaged chiefly in usury), 17,000 French, 14,000 Italians, 6,000 British and 7,000 Germans. About 50,000 foreigners lived in Alexandria (they comprised nearly a quarter of the urban population).<sup>22</sup>

Unfortunately, throughout this dark period in Arab history and in the circumstances mentioned above, members of indigenous Jewish communities and descendants of early settlers moved increasingly away from their Arab neighbors and acquired Western culture,<sup>23</sup> sometimes to the point of total alienation, as in the case of the Jews of Algeria who threw in their lot with the French colonialists. "It was not at all rare" says André Chouraqui, "to find Europeanized Jews who had never so much as conducted a conversation with a Moslem, who had not the least conception of Moslem thought

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(22) *Ibid.*, pp. 162-63.

(23) A. Hourani, *Minorities in the Arab World* (London, 1947), pp. 24-26.

and culture or of the aspirations of the impoverished Moslem masses, who had never even heard the voice of a Muezzin call out for prayer..."<sup>24</sup> This is indeed a sad contrast to the earlier eras when Jews contributed to the flourishing of Arab civilization.

From that time on, friction between the majority of the population and the Jewish minorities should be viewed as a symptom of Arab dissatisfaction with the general situation in the Arab world. This study shall not fail to stress this point. Nor shall it minimize the fact that Arab nationalist leaders have sought to foster an Arab national sentiment among all members of the Jewish communities in the area and to induce them to bear their share of the general responsibility of citizenship.

### C. ZIONISM AND EMIGRATION TO PALESTINE

The Jews in the Arab countries were connected to Palestine through their religious heritage. In the nineteenth century, the rivalry between the Powers over the East led the British to initiate various Jewish projects. Lutsky writes :

... During the Eastern crisis of 1839-41 the British reverted to Bonaparte's plans for the creation of a Jewish state in Jerusalem. In 1838, Lord Shaftesbury and then Gaule and the British consul in Palestine, James Finn, put forward a number of projects for the transfer of the Jews to Palestine and the creation there of a Jewish state under British protection.

These plans were welcomed by Lord Palmerstone,

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(24) *A History of the Jews of North Africa* (Philadelphia, 1968), p. 264. See also pp. 281-84.

who regarded them as a guarantee of the safety of imperial communications. Sir Moses Montefiore, a British banker related to the Rothschild family, also supported these plans. Montefiore visited the East several times and even bought an orange grove near Jaffa in 1855, but was unable to attract a single Jewish colonist.<sup>25</sup>

Later, when the Zionist movement began its organized efforts to direct Jewish emigrants to Palestine, the Zionist leaders neither paid much attention to Oriental Jews, nor did the latter respond to the call of the Zionist movement.<sup>26</sup>

Until the Second World War, Zionist activities in the Arab countries were intermittent and scant. In fact the Jews in the Arab countries played no great part in the Zionist emigration program to Palestine. Of the 460,000 Jews who entered Palestine between 1919 and 1948, Schechtman estimates that only 42,000 came from the Arab and Islamic countries, or 9 percent of the total number of immigrants of whom the Ashkenazim formed the highest percentage.<sup>27</sup> But with the creation of the State of Israel, and as a result of the new factors which its creation introduced in the area, Jewish communities in the Arab countries became the principal source of immigrants to Israel. They were to be instrumental in fulfilling Israel's need for manpower and military strength.<sup>28</sup>

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(25) Lutsky, pp. 131-32.

(26) Ben Zvi sees that the lack of response on the part of Oriental Jews to the Zionist Movement was due to their remoteness from the European centers, to the smallness of their numbers and to the suspicions with which the Ottomans viewed the movement. *The Exiled and the Redeemed* (London, 1958), p. 3.

(27) *On Wings of Eagles* (New York, 1960), p. 339.

(28) See Ben Zvi, p. 17.

The perennial complaint of Israeli leaders has been the shortage of manpower and they perpetually castigate Zionists in the diaspora for contributing money and advice instead of trained immigrants.<sup>29</sup> It was not until they failed to attract immigrants from America that Zionist agencies, such as the United Jewish Appeal and the American Joint Distribution Committee, turned to gathering immigrants from other parts of the world. By harping on "imminent" persecution and other means of propaganda, Zionist agents succeeded in destroying the peaceful existence which Jews had enjoyed among their Arab brethren for centuries. It should be noted that in North Africa, only 5 percent of emigrant Jews arrived in Israel in 1949-51. Mass exodus of North African Jews began only as the various North African countries gained their independence; but it was part of the exodus of the European population.<sup>30</sup> Of the 700,000 Jews who left the Arab world, 500,000 went to Israel,<sup>31</sup> the rest travelled mostly to Canada, the U.S.A. and Latin America. Thus immigrants from the Arab world and other Middle Eastern countries constituted 47 percent of the total number of immigrants in 1949, but 86 percent in 1956.<sup>32</sup>

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(29) See A. Lilienthal, *The Other Side of the Coin* (New York, 1965), pp. 24, 29, 32, 36, 47, and elsewhere.

(30) Chouraqui, pp. 287-89.

(31) They form 42 percent of the Israeli population.

(32) Schechtman, p. 340.

## II

### JEWS OF IRAQ

#### A. CONDITIONS BEFORE 1951

1. *Historical Note:* The origin of the Jewish community in Iraq goes back to those Jews who were taken into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. Over the ages it gained in importance, particularly during the Golden Age of Baghdad under Arab rule.<sup>1</sup> Like the other inhabitants of Iraq, the Jewish community found itself in conflict with the Turkish administration during the First World War. For this reason, Iraqi Jews supported the Arab Revolt and considered the cause of Arab independence to be their cause too.<sup>2</sup>

2. *Population.* Racially, the Iraqi Jews constituted a homogeneous entity in contrast to other Jewish communities in the area, for the country did not witness any waves of Jewish immigration.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of Jews in Iraq before 1951, as they were distributed over the whole area, even among the Kurds in the north. In 1947 their number was estimated at 118,000 persons. They did not live in separate quarters although they showed an obvious tendency to congregate in certain neighborhoods.

3. *Religious Life and Organization.* Religious minorities under the Ottomans enjoyed complete independence in matters

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(1) For further details see Lilienthal, p. 37.

(2) Landshut, p. 4.

relating to their religions. The Chief Rabbi, the Nasi and a ten-man council administered the civil, religious, and educational institutions of the Jewish community in Iraq. This system remained in effect until the beginning of the thirties when Iraq gained its independence. A new law was promulgated then (Law No. 77/1931), reorganizing the Jewish population and dividing it into three separate communities: Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra. A fourth community, DIALA, was added later. Each enjoyed a great deal of internal independence,<sup>3</sup> and was governed by a community chief, a Chief Rabbi, an elected general council and a financial council. The new law permitted Jews to have their own courts which were to look into matters of personal status not subject to Iraqi civil law, and to have a community chest.<sup>4</sup>

The Baghdad community enjoyed a great deal of prestige among Jews in the Orient who looked towards it for spiritual guidance and sought the advice of its rabbis in religious matters.<sup>5</sup>

4. *Economic Life.* Under the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate (1921-1932) Jews played a prominent role in the economic life of Iraq. There were Jewish financiers, small moneylenders, and big bank owners. They profited by their old connections with the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean in establishing a flourishing trade. They controlled a high proportion of the import-export and retail business. Before the Second World War, Jews conducted

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(3) Hourani, pp. 91, 94, 102.

(4) *Iraqi Official Directory 1936* and *Iraqi Laws and Regulations 1931*.

(5) D. Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad* (London, 1949), p. 202.

95 percent of the country's import business, 90 percent of the contracting business and 10 percent of the export business.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to commerce, Iraqi Jews worked in the various professions undertaken normally by the middle class, and in government jobs. Some earned their living from handicrafts.

When the British Mandate came to an end (1932), the economic position of Iraqi Jews receded although they still maintained a prominent position in the country's economy. The newly independent regime followed a more equitable policy in order to provide greater opportunities for the less-privileged inhabitants of the country to improve their conditions. During the Second World War, Jews still controlled 80 percent of the import business, 10 percent of the contracting business and 5 percent of the export business.<sup>7</sup>

5. *Social Life.* In a study of the socio-economic conditions of Jewish communities, the author, S.P. Sassoon, Vice President of the Sephardim League in Tel Aviv, states that the 30,000 Jewish families in Iraq owned houses worth three million Iraqi dinars, land worth five million dinars and synagogues and schools worth twenty million dinars.<sup>8</sup>

It is worth noting that the Jewish community in Iraq had always considered itself to be a segment of the Iraqi people to whom it was linked by strong ties. Arabic remained its mother tongue.<sup>9</sup> The Jews in Iraq had not been exposed to Western influences to any greater degree than had the remaining sections of the population. They were not, as a result,

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(6) Schechtman, pp. 89 and 104.

(7) *Ibid.*

(8) *Ibid.*, p. 106.

(9) Landshtut, p. 42.

alienated from the social, cultural and political aspects of life around them.

6. *Education and Cultural Life.* Under the Ottomans, Jews were absolutely free to maintain their educational institutions. In 1865, the L'Alliance Israélite established a highly respectable school in Baghdad which included the institution of French, English, Turkish, Hebrew and Arabic in its curriculum, in addition to modern science. Among its graduates were some of the most prominent Jews in Baghdad. There were also other Jewish schools financed by the community chest at which students of both sexes received free education.

After its independence (1932), the Iraqi government sought to follow an educational system aimed at eliminating cultural differences between the minorities in the hope of realizing a tighter national unity. For the Jewish community in Iraq, this meant more Jewish students were admitted to government schools, that Hebrew was restricted to the instruction of religious material, that the Jewish teaching body was opened to non-Jewish teachers and that government funds were provided to supplement funds from the community chest, while the number of Jewish students abroad holding government scholarships increased.<sup>10</sup>

Jews owned several flourishing publishing houses which printed books and periodicals in Hebrew.<sup>11</sup> They also worked in the press. Na'im Qattan, for example, dominated the organ of the National Democratic Party and wrote its editorials, Murad al-Ammari edited the foreign news in the organ of the said party and Jackson edited the *Iraq Times*.

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(10) Landshut, p. 42.

(11) Sassoon, p. 201.



7. *Public Role of Jews.* The Jews of Iraq played an important role in the public life of the country under the Ottoman Empire. Under the British Mandate, they profited greatly by the need of the newly-established administration for qualified persons to fill government posts, especially for those who knew foreign languages. Some rose to be members of Parliament and ministers in the government. After 1932, Jews were called for the military service.<sup>12</sup> They also played an active role in leftist-oriented parties,<sup>13</sup> and dominated their organs as mentioned earlier.

The Jewish community in Iraq, then, was flourishing. Jews lived for many generations in the area, enjoying full and equal rights. They were free to earn their living without any restrictions.<sup>14</sup> They felt no cause for disquiet or lack of confidence in the future. Such matters as the measures taken by the Iraqi government after 1932 aimed at providing greater work opportunities for the other segments of the population in government offices, or the national reaction against the Zionist movement, did not constitute an anti-Jewish policy. They were evidence of a normal development of Arab nationalism in Iraq. The Jews remained in a better position than the other minorities, rooted in the country and felt themselves part of the Arab population. Iraqi officials, for their part, remained convinced that the Iraqi Jewish citizens were not in sympathy with Zionist ideas.

The fact is that, apart from the natural attention Iraqi Jews paid to developments in Palestine, they felt no solidarity

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(12) Schechtman, p. 102.

(13) *Jewish Agency Report*, p. 380.

(14) R. Bashan, "Jews Plight in Arab Countries," *Israel Magazine*, Vol. I, No. 9 (1968), p. 7.

with the political aims of the Zionist movement. The assurances and declarations they made concerning their loyalty to Iraq were not the result of any external pressures, but the expression of a genuine wish to prevent any suspicions from creeping into the minds of their compatriots due to the stands and activities of Zionist leaders.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the Jewish Agency confessed in its report to the Anglo-American Committee in 1946 that leftist Jewish youths in Iraq had formed the "Anti-Zionist League" which was supported by many national leaders.<sup>16</sup> When the Committee arrived in Baghdad, the ten Jewish witnesses who appeared before it testified that conditions were normal, that their future was not in any danger and that their economic conditions were similar to those of the other inhabitants.<sup>17</sup>

But it was inevitable that the Jewish Agency should recruit agents in Iraq to spread Zionist propaganda. The Iraqi Jews were embarrassed and acted to block the Zionist current. But the Iraqi government felt more and more called upon to take measures to preserve national homogeneity and internal peace. At the time, little did the Iraqi Jews realize to what extent the Palestine events were to affect their lives in the future.

A case in point is the Israeli campaign mounted recently against the U.S.S.R. for the sake of drawing Soviet Jews to emigrate to Israel. There again, Soviet Jewish citizens from all walks of life denounced the false Zionist accusations. For example, the International Edition of the *Herald Tribune* of

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(15) E. Berger, *Who Knows Better Must Say So* (New York, 1955), p. 31.

(16) *Jewish Agency Report*, pp. 379-380.

(17) B.G. Crum, *Behind the Silken Curtain* (New York, 1947), pp. 151, 247.

January 8, 1971 printed two items to this effect. The *New York Times* correspondent from Moscow reported that one of the delegations which visited the U.S. Embassy on January 7 to protest against what they described as "Zionist hooligans" was made up of six Soviet Jews who worked at a construction enterprise. Reuter reported the following from Geneva:

Aron Vergelis, editor-in-chief of the Soviet Yiddish-language literary magazine *Sovietish Heimland*, today blamed foreign propaganda for many of the problems faced by Jews in the Soviet Union.

He told a press conference here that there was a Jewish problem in the Soviet Union and said, "It has become a problem because of foreign propaganda, and it has got worse."

The dispatch went on to say:

Mr Vergelis said there had been a false impression abroad about the recent Leningrad trial of Jews and added, "I am sure that to mix the Jewish question in that affair is propaganda ..."

He said a number of Jews had been allowed to leave the Soviet Union and many of those who went to Israel now wanted to return. "If there was no propaganda campaign there would be no problem," he declared. "The reserve of those who still want to leave is almost exhausted."

8. *Effects of Palestine War — 1948.* Upon entering the Palestine War in 1948, Iraq declared martial law; Zionist activities were suppressed and a number of Jews were removed from their government posts. Iraq's Rabbi Sassoon

Khaddouri acknowledged that there had been no secrecy or conspiracy in the application of the measures since the press reported on them and, later, on the public trial of Shafiq 'Ads, a leading Jew who was tried on charges of high treason for having smuggled merchandize to Israel during the war. Rabbi Khaddouri did not look upon these measures as reprehensible considering the circumstances the country was going through. Nor did he think that they were harsher than the measures taken against the Japanese in the U.S.A. after the attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>18</sup>

Jewish lives and property were not attacked. All allegations as to the confiscation of Jewish property were groundless. Jews, on the other hand, were quickly responding to the Chief Rabbi's call for donations on behalf of the Palestinian people (according to Reuter, 500,000 dinars were donated by Iraqi Jews). Anti-Jewish activity was minimal though anti-British and anti-American feelings reached a high pitch as these two countries were held responsible for the Palestine problem. Responsible Iraqis and Jewish leaders were fully convinced that the crisis would be temporary and that life would return to normal. In fact, soon signs appeared indicating that the government was about to relax some of the measures it took when the country went to war.<sup>19</sup>

Yet, in spite of general confidence that the situation was returning to normal, a mass exodus of Iraqi Jews took place between 1950 and 1951.

9. *Emigration.* There had never before been any mass emigration of Jews from Iraq. A number of Baghdad Jews

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(18) E. Berger p. 34; see also Landshut, p. 49.

(19) Schechtman, p. 111.

had gone to Palestine driven by religious motives since the mid 1890s.<sup>20</sup> Then, in the post-war (Second World War) years, many considered going in search of better work opportunities to Palestine and the U.S.A., for Iraq's economy was going through a recession.<sup>21</sup> Albion Ross of the *New York Times* confirms the fact that economic factors, not persecution, spurred large numbers to emigrate, some even illegally.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, by 1948, only 7988 Jews, mostly from Kurdistan, had gone to Palestine despite the strong wave of Zionist propaganda.

After the establishment of the State of Israel, Zionist agencies and Israeli authorities bore pressure on Iraqi Jews to induce them to settle in Israel. As a result of these pressures, Iraqi Jews found themselves in an awkward position. The principal factors which caused growing tensions between Iraqi citizens and their Jewish compatriots are well established. Reacting against Zionist agitation among Iraqi Jews, the Iraqi authorities imposed certain restrictions on her Jewish citizens. This was an unprecedented event in the history of the Jewish community in Iraq.<sup>23</sup> The fears and hopes that Zionist propaganda had tried to arouse but with limited success, now bore fruit. In 1948-49, large numbers of young Jews were smuggled into Iran, from whence Zionist agents conveyed them to Israel. Iran cooperated by declaring a policy of "open doors" to all who sought refuge in its territories, while Zionist agents intensified their campaign purposely

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(20) Sassoon, p. 146.

(21) Hourani, p. 104.

(22) Schechtman, p. 96.

(23) A. Lilienthal, *What Price Israel* (Chicago, 1953), pp. 197-199.

using methods which further aroused the suspicions of the Iraqi government.

A way out of this stalemate had to be found. The Iraqi authorities began consultations with leading Jews. But although they did not wish to see their Jewish citizens leave the country and had no doubts about their loyalty as a group, they realized that discontent among Jews had reached a point where it would be better for all concerned to permit those desirous of leaving to do so, in order that quiet and harmony could return to the land,<sup>24</sup> and martial law be lifted. This was also the wish of the Jews who intended to remain. Ezra Menahem Daniel, member of the Iraqi Senate, demanded that the government return to its policy of equal rights towards remaining Jews, and lift all the measures taken during the war.<sup>25</sup>

Consequently, Jews wishing to leave were invited to register their names at the Ministry of the Interior. The Iraqi government passed the "Option Law" according to which any Jew who wished to leave the country forfeited permanently his nationality. Those who registered their names were generally the poorer elements, mostly Kurdish Jews.

During 1949 Jewish emigration from Iraq had been sporadic. In 1950 the Jewish Agency stepped it up through "Operation Ali Baba." Even then, *agents provocateurs* had to throw dynamite sticks that made more noise than damage into Jewish neighborhoods;<sup>26</sup> this terrorism was enough to cause another 113,545 persons to leave.<sup>27</sup>

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(24) Schechtman, p. 111.

(25) *Ibid.*; see also Lilienthal, *What Price Israel*, pp. 197-199.

(26) Lilienthal, *Other Side of the Coin*, p. 38.

(27) Many persons left Iraq rather than be separated from the younger members of their families who had been more susceptible to Zionist propaganda; see interview with Rabbi Khaddouri, E. Berger, p. 38.

B. *CONDITIONS FROM 1951-1967*

About five thousand Jews remained in Iraq, mostly in Baghdad. On March 21, 1951 a decision was taken returning to them all the rights granted to Iraqi citizens under the constitution.<sup>28</sup> The 1931 law organizing the community was amended in 1958. Jewish affairs were now administered by a five-man committee which eventually distributed Jewish Waqf property among remaining Jews. But the property of Jews who forfeited their nationality has been administered by a caretaker since 1951 in accordance with the law. It should also be noted that Iraqi dependants of persons whose property has been thus frozen benefit from the revenues of this property.

Eventually, however, the Iraqi government reimposed a number of restrictions aimed at preventing Jewish money from being smuggled out of the country. Political developments in Iraq had led many wealthy Jews to smuggle their money by way of neighboring countries. At first the government had no means of checking this outflow of funds. But since most Jewish assets were in the form of immovable property, the Iraqi government saw to it that no form of transfer of assets was conducted without first being subjected to government scrutiny in order to verify its legitimacy.

Nevertheless, in spite of all the Zionist propaganda about the bad conditions in which the Jews of Iraq supposedly live, the *Jewish Chronicle* (June 9, 1963) reported that the Jews in Baghdad were free to practice their religion and worship in synagogues, and that their children still went to Jewish

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(28) Berger, p. 38; and Schechtman, pp. 123-124.

schools. It reported further that 30 percent of Baghdad Jews were wealthy, 40 percent were of the middle class and 30 percent were poor; this distribution indicates that Jewish citizens fare better than their compatriots.

### C. CONDITIONS AFTER 1967

When Israel complains about the treatment of Jews of Iraq, it fails to remember its treatment of the Arabs in the territories it occupies. But a Reuter reporter said in August, 1967 that the relationship of Iraqi Jews with their compatriots was peaceful and neighborly, and that Rabbi Sassoon Khaddouri had condemned the Zionist aggression.<sup>29</sup> At a later date the Chief Rabbi called upon Jewish citizens to contribute funds to the Iraqi Army and he thanked the government for its good treatment of Jews.<sup>30</sup>

But the intensity of Zionist anti-Iraqi propaganda increased, particularly after the execution of a number of Jews. These were among a larger number of Iraqis similarly tried and executed for the same crime. As citizens of Iraq, Jews are subject to the laws of the land like any Iraqi citizen. The arrest of an Iraqi Jew on charges of high treason, consequently, emanates from a legal conviction that Iraqi Jews owe their loyalty to Iraq. Still, the Iraqi government invited foreign correspondents to visit the country and see for themselves. The correspondents met Rabbi Khaddouri who stated that Jews worshipped freely and went about their daily life without interference. The reporters then visited the Jewish com-

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(29) *Institute of Jewish Affairs* (London, August 1967), p. 8.

(30) Bashan, p. 8.



munity and went to see synagogues and schools. They saw no evidence of the Zionists allegations.<sup>31</sup>

Another correspondent, R. Chemili from West Germany who visited Iraq in 1969, wrote that some of the financial restrictions imposed on Jews had been removed some weeks ago. Young Jews in search of a brighter future went to study foreign languages. They might think of emigrating, the reporter continued, but rather to Western Europe and North America, not to Israel.<sup>32</sup>

Jews in Iraq are aware of the conditions under which Oriental Jews live in Israel. Rabbi Khaddouri told a reporter once that the Iraqi Jews live better than their brethren in Israel who inhabit wooden shacks and are considered inferior to European Jews. He mentioned also that even if the Israeli allegations were true concerning restrictions on work for Jews, the income of the community from Jewish property would be enough to support its members.<sup>33</sup>

The latest development in Iraq as regards Jewish citizens has been the Iraqi government's favorable response to the efforts made by the Palestine Liberation Movement (Fateh) concerning the return of Arab Jews who emigrated to Israel.<sup>34</sup> The Iraqi government has invited all such Jews to return to Iraq and live side by side with other Iraqi citizens enjoying equal rights and opportunities.

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(31) *Jewish Observer and Middle East Review* (14 February 1969), p. 7.

(32) *Süddeutsche Zeitung* as it appeared in *Al-Nahar* (17 September 1969).

(33) *Al-Usbou' al-Arabi* (15 September 1969).

(34) The Moroccan *Al-Alam* (18 May 1970).



### III

## JEWS OF SYRIA

### A. CONDITIONS BEFORE 1948

1. *Historical Note.* A large Jewish community has existed in Syria since ancient times.<sup>1</sup> With the advent of Islam, Jews acquired a special status within the framework of the Muslim community; and the well-known Ottoman Millah system granted them a great deal of autonomy according to the same organizational lines prevailing elsewhere in the Empire.<sup>2</sup>

The Jewish population in Syria was composed of indigenous Jews and of Sephardim and Ashkenazim immigrants (or Signores Francos).<sup>3</sup> The 1943 census put the number of Jews at 29,770 persons (17,000 in Aleppo, 11,000 in Damascus, and the rest in the north). Later figures are inexact due to illegal Jewish emigration to Palestine.

2. *Economic Life.* Syrian Jews were not as wealthy as those of Iraq and Egypt. They dealt in credit and held such jobs as those of tax collectors and financial assistants to the Pashas and Effendis. Beaton reported that there were moneylenders

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(1) F. Beaton reported that 10,000 Jews lived in Damascus in the first century A.D. *The Jews in the East* (London, 1859), p. 296.

(2) In the eighteenth century, community leaders obliged alien Jews to contribute their share of the taxes the Syrian Jewish community owed the Ottoman authorities. But alien Jews held onto their rights under the system of "Capitulations" which exempted them from taxation. W. Zenner, "Syrian Jews in Three Social Settings," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, Vol. X, No. 1 (June 1968), p. 103.

(3) *Ibid.*, pp. 102-107.

in Damascus in 1856 who charged an interest rate of 24 per cent, or over twice the legal rate. They lent money to peasants who could not pay their taxes, against their next year's crops.<sup>4</sup>

Jews monopolized such trades as fine wood and metal works (copper carving, gold smithing, etc.) weaving, dying and the spinning of silk thread. There is some evidence that Jewish handicraftsmen joined in closed guilds. But they often worked on an individual basis.<sup>5</sup>

In the field of commerce, the most important center was Aleppo. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Jewish merchants were so powerful that they imposed their own Sabbath as the day of rest for foreign trade and caravan business.<sup>6</sup>

Towards the end of the last century and the beginning of the present one, the economic position of the Jews in Syria began to regress, partly because caravan trade lost its importance, and partly because other groups who had begun to compete with Jews broke the Jewish monopoly in some economic fields. Their decline was also due to the general deteriorating situation in the country, as the central Ottoman authority weakened. Many people suffered and the Jews, like the Muslims and Christians, sought more favorable living conditions elsewhere.

When the French Mandate was imposed on Syria, the Jewish community regained part of its previous prosperity, but only for a while. Jews profited by the new Administration's need to fill newly-created government posts, especially because

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(4) P. 299.

(5) Zenner, p. 104.

(6) A.-K. Gharaibah, *Souriyah fi al-Karn al-Tasi'e* [Syria in the nineteenth century] (Cairo, 1962), p. 129.

many graduates of the Alliance Israélite schools had continued their education in France. However, continued Muslim and Christian competition and emigration further undermined their economic position. Big Jewish merchants remained wealthy but the number of peddlers and small shop owners increased. So did the recipients of charity.<sup>7</sup>

3. *Social Life.* Although the Jewish community in Syria was a cohesive body, it was divided into social groups distinguishable along the lines of economic status or kinship. At the top of the social structure there was a fair number of rich and influential families, mostly merchants, such as the Farhis, the Stamboulis, and the Lisbonas. In the nineteenth century, some of these people acted as consuls of foreign countries. Members of the Marcopoli family, for instance, represented Spain and the Italian provinces. Members of this social group formed the community councils in accordance with the Millah system. Next to them came the middle class. The lower class experienced widespread poverty, particularly in Damascus; it was greatly dependent upon the support of European Jews<sup>8</sup> and Syrian emigrants.<sup>9</sup>

It appears that Syrian Jews intermixed with the other communities but the traditional accounts indicate that social barriers existed. The socio-economic and political conditions in the land bred separate social groups. Each had its own

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(7) Schechtman, p. 151; according to a study cited by Schechtman up to 15 percent of Damascene Jews lived on charity.

(8) Beaton reported on an interview in 1856 between Alfonso Rothschild and Damascus Jews who had come to ask for his assistance. Rothschild chided them for their lack of interest in agriculture and modern technology; p. 301.

(9) Schechtman, p. 152.

traditional leaders, internal structure and common economic interests, and each lived in its own quarter.

As the various social groups in Syria became exposed to forms of modern culture,<sup>10</sup> social barriers began to fade (including the Millah system). A Jerusalemite Jew of Syrian origin reported that he had learned typesetting from Christians.<sup>11</sup> Jews acquired more and more of the social customs of the majority.<sup>12</sup> After Syria became independent, the government sought to weld the Syrian population into a more cohesive nation. All French schools, including the Alliance Israélite ones, were closed down. When they were reopened, their programs underwent a great deal of change. Arabic was taught ten times a week, Arab history received special attention, etc.<sup>13</sup> But although the majority of Jews spoke Arabic, Ladino, too, remained in use.

4. *Political Life.* The modern history of Syria is distinguished by the progressive growth of the Arab nationalist movement. Jews stood to profit under the French administration, yet many joined the national struggle against France, since they felt they constituted part of the Syrian people.<sup>14</sup> Naturally, in this atmosphere seething with nationalist senti-

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(10) In the nineteenth century, the Alliance Israélite Universelle schools of Damascus and Aleppo introduced European culture in a French-Jewish wrapping; Zenner, p. 105. Also, British Christian missions opened a school in Damascus for Jewish children which held 3 teachers and 25 students; Gharaibah. Even the traditional religious elementary schools (Talmud Torah) began to introduce programs based on those taught in foreign schools.

(11) Zenner, p. 104.

(12) Hourani, p. 75.

(13) The programs of Jewish religious schools remained little changed, except for the introduction of Arabic.

(14) F. MaCallam, *Nationalist Crusade in Syria* (New York, 1928), p. 63; and Schechtman, p. 150.

ment, a number of Jews, mostly from Damascus, responded to the Zionist call.<sup>15</sup> By and large, however, Syrian Jews were not particularly interested in the political aims of Zionism. Jewish leaders and members of Parliament<sup>16</sup> expressed their loyalty to their country and supported the struggle of the Palestinian Arabs against Zionism. For instance, in 1936 Aleppo Jews cabled the French government in support of the Syrian delegation negotiating in Paris,<sup>17</sup> while in 1947, Wahid Mizrahi, the Jewish representative in the Syrian Parliament, attacked the partition of Palestine. He said:

The Jews condemn this unjust decision and condemn Zionist action. They consider Zionism a Western political ideology independent of religion and incompatible with the customs, language and values of the Jews in the Arab countries. If Zionism intends to include us within its framework, I declare from this rostrum that we are innocent of its actions . . . I wish everybody to know that we do not share with Zionism its activities nor do we agree with its end and means. We shall be the first to struggle in order to protect this country from the dangers of Zionism.<sup>18</sup>

When the Palestine War (1948) broke out, the Syrian government took a number of precautionary measures; for

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(15) During the First World War, the Jews who were exiled from Palestine to Damascus succeeded in starting a Zionist movement there; Zenner, p. 105.

(16) In accordance with Article 37 of the 1930 Constitution, Jews had one seat in Parliament.

(17) Schechtman, p. 150.

(18) Minutes of the meetings of the Syrian Parliament, 12 January 1942. See also Schechtman, p. 156; Crum, p. 239; and *Jewish Agency Report*.

instance, certain pro-Zionist employees in key positions in the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Telephones, Telegraph and Post, and the Police were removed. Aleppo had witnessed twenty-four hours of tension in December 1947. How violence broke out is still unknown.<sup>19</sup> But the President of the Republic assured the Jewish leaders who had complained that such incidents would not occur again. Apart from the events which occurred on that day, nothing happened which threatened the Jews in Syria. When the campaign to collect money in aid of Palestine started in March 1948, Aleppo and Damascus Jews contributed forty thousand Syrian pounds.<sup>20</sup>

5. *Emigration.* Driven by the economic conditions previously mentioned, thousands of Jews began to emigrate, mostly to the U.S.A. and Brazil. They went also to Shanghai, Bombay, Egypt, and Lebanon. About 27,000 persons are said to have left the country between the two world wars.<sup>21</sup>

Palestine did not become the main target of Jewish emigrants until it prospered under the British Mandate.<sup>22</sup> After 1930 in particular, a number of Syrian Jews responded to the Zionist call and many of them settled in kibbutzim in the Galilee.<sup>23</sup> When, in 1945, the Syrian government began to

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(19) Berger reported that Jewish boys marched through the streets chanting "33 against 13" referring to the votes in the UN on the Partition Plan. A street fight broke out which soon took a dangerous turn; p. 57.

(20) Schechtman, p. 160.

(21) *Ibid.*, p. 152.

(22) A small Syrian Jewish community had lived in Jerusalem since the nineteenth century, but the motives that had drawn Syrian Jews to the Holy Land were purely religious. On the other hand, the prosperity in Palestine was attracting many Syrian and Lebanese Christians too.

(23) Zenner, p. 113.



combat Jewish emigration to Palestine, the Zionist agencies ran an illicit traffic which took Syrian Jews to Palestine by way of Marjeyoun, Mutilleh and Bint Jbeil in Lebanon.<sup>24</sup> Rabbi Berger believes that this wave of Jewish emigration cannot be attributed to the Palestine problem. Most of the emigrants, primarily from the upper income bracket in Aleppo, left in search of better opportunities for work once their economic position in the town receded.<sup>25</sup>

### B. CONDITIONS AFTER 1948

With the end of the war in Palestine, security measures were relaxed and travel restrictions were lifted. Jews continued to emigrate. But after 1948 Lebanon became their immediate target.

Non-Zionist Jews visiting in Syria found a small Jewish community (5000-6000) leading a normal life as an integral part of the larger community.<sup>26</sup> Jewish citizens expressed their opposition to the idea of a Jewish National Home or a Jewish State.<sup>27</sup>

After 1967, foreign reporters writing on the conditions of the Jews in the Arab world found that Zionist allegations were false. For example, R. Chemili wrote that Syrian Jews faced no complex problems. The government did not decree any discriminatory laws against Jews nor did it conduct any anti-Jewish campaigns. He saw Jews worshipping freely and found that they still controlled several handicrafts such as

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(24) Schechtman, p. 155.

(25) Berger, p. 59.

(26) Lilienthal, *Council News* (January 1954); and Schechtman, p. 160.

(27) Berger, pp. 55-58.

carving on copper and brass, as they had done since ancient times.<sup>28</sup> Pierre Demeron, who visited Damascus in February 1970, described seeing Jewish merchants, lawyers, doctors and university students. He visited their synagogues and schools<sup>29</sup> and learned that the Memonedes School received contributions from Jewish emigrants in America without objections from any quarter.<sup>30</sup>

At present there are some 3500 Jews still living in Syria. They are still ruled by their Millah council in matters pertaining to the internal affairs of their community.

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(28) As quoted in *Al-Nabaz Sunday Supplement* (7 August 1969).

(29) Berger commented in 1955 that he found the level of instruction in the Ozar Hatora to be low; consequently, Jewish students were sent to the elementary and secondary schools (and universities) run by the government for all children of school age.

(30) Quoted by *Al-Hayat* (15 February 1970).

## IV

### JEWS OF LEBANON

#### A. CONDITIONS BEFORE 1948

1. *Historical Note.* Possibly the first Jews to settle in Lebanon did so in biblical times. The majority of the Jews in Lebanon now are descendants of Spanish emigrants who settled first in Mount Lebanon in the sixteenth century,<sup>1</sup> later in Sidon and then Beirut.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Beaton found a Jewish community whose members were indistinguishable from their Druse, Maronite and Matawilah (a Muslim Shi'ite sect) neighbors except for their religious practices.<sup>2</sup>

2. *Population.* According to the 1944 census, 6,261 Jews lived in Lebanon.<sup>3</sup> Their number swelled with the influx of Syrian Jews, particularly since December 1947.<sup>4</sup> Most present day Jews are still Sephardim. A number of Ashkenazim came from Palestine before 1947.<sup>5</sup> Most Jews in Lebanon live in

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(1) In a private interview in July 1970, Albert Elia, Secretary of the Jewish Religious Council in Beirut added that fugitive Jews reached Lebanon where they learned that the Druse ruled Mount Lebanon. They sought asylum in the capital, Deir al-Qamar. Eventually they taught their neighbors soap manufacturing and collected taxes for Emir Bashir.

(2) Beaton, p. 224.

(3) Landshut, p. 54.

(4) See Berger, p. 55 and "Secure How Much Longer," *World Jewry* (July, 1958), p. 4.

(5) According to Albert Elia (interview), Lebanon has not been exposed to any direct Jewish immigration from Europe.

Beirut, the remaining few in Sidon and Tripoli.<sup>6</sup>

3. *Legal Status and Religious Organization.* Until the First World War, Lebanon formed part of the Ottoman Empire. The Jews had the same amount of autonomy enjoyed by all religious communities under the Millah system. The French Mandate also recognized the right of these communities to have their own religious identity and to be under their own jurisdiction in matters pertaining to personal status, in accordance with their special religious laws.<sup>7</sup>

The Beirut Jewish Religious Council<sup>8</sup> was recognized by the Lebanese government to be the sole representative of the Jewish community and its governing body.

The funds needed to run the community schools, hospitals, etc., were raised by means of direct and indirect taxation, donations and waqf property.<sup>9</sup> Jewish waqf (first established in 1922) provided 35 percent of the income of the community chest.

The Lebanese constitution (1926) granted all citizens equal rights and duties. But as the Jewish community in each electoral district was too small to have its own representative in Parliament, its members voted for a non-Jewish candidate running in the area, following the advice of the Jewish Millah Council.

4. *Economic Life.* The economic conditions of the Jewish

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(6) Landshut, p. 55.

(7) Hourani, p. 64.

(8) The council chairman and twelve members are elected once every two years.

(9) Waqf property is acquired with money from three main sources: donations, additional taxation and compensations paid by the Beirut Municipality in return for Jewish property acquired for city planning purposes. See also *Jerusalem Post* (3 July 1966).

community were very satisfactory. Seventy percent were merchants, stockbrokers and financiers; 25 percent were manufacturers (the first ones came from Palestine in the early thirties);<sup>10</sup> and 5 percent were professionals. Jews controlled the profitable touristic and entertainment projects including the ski-lift installments.<sup>11</sup> But they rarely joined the civil service.<sup>12</sup>

5. *Social Life.* Lebanese Jews constituted an upper social class;<sup>13</sup> whereas the majority (originally from Syria) formed the middle and lower middle class.

Though many members of the Jewish community were influenced by French culture, the majority were integrated in the Arab culture while, simultaneously, they guarded their Jewishness.<sup>14</sup>

The community operated a wide variety of social-welfare programs: free medical services, maternity care, vocational training, youth centers, summer camps, etc. The funds needed for these programs came from the community chest and from donations by wealthy Jews abroad.

6. *Education.* Under the Ottomans, the community ran its own schools which were mostly of the Talmud Torah type. The changes which began to be introduced into their programs were based on the French and American missionary school curricula. Until the First World War, the only school which offered secular subjects, in addition to a Jewish educa-

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(10) Albert Elia, interview.

(11) Schechtman, p. 178.

(12) Landshut, p. 55.

(13) Albert Elia, interview.

(14) Berger, p. 54.

tion, was the Alliance Israélite school in Beirut.<sup>15</sup> The few other schools (Salime Trabe School, Ozar Hatora) emphasized religious instruction. There was one vocational school. Whereas most Alliance students came from wealthy families, the other students who attended the latter schools mentioned above received a free education since these schools were supported by the community chest.<sup>16</sup>

To earn university degrees, Jewish students joined one of the universities in Beirut. For example in 1947-48, 54 students attended the Université Saint Joseph and 102 the American University of Beirut.<sup>17</sup>

## B. EFFECTS OF THE 1948 EVENTS

The Jewish community in Lebanon had always lived a prosperous and peaceful life and had enjoyed its constitutional rights.<sup>18</sup> However, in 1945 the country witnessed a surge of anti-Zionist sentiment. But because the Lebanese distinguished between Judaism and Zionism, this sentiment was not channeled against Jews. Even the boycott measures against Zionist goods (passed in December) had no effect whatsoever on the economic position of Lebanese Jews.<sup>19</sup>

Eventually, the Lebanese government was obliged to take joint action with Syria to curb illegal emigration. The Mac-

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(15) In 1935, 673 students were registered; in 1948, i.e. after the influx of Syrian immigrants, their number rose to 1043 students.

(16) A large number of Jewish children attended foreign missionary schools, *Jerusalem Post* (3 July 1966).

(17) Schechtman, p. 173.

(18) When the Vichy Regime attempted to introduce some restrictive measures in 1940, the Patriarch and Grand Mufti objected officially.

(19) *World Jewry* (July 1959), p. 4.

cabean Youth Club and Bnei Zion were suspected of being in collusion with other Zionist organizations known to smuggle Jews into Palestine. However, the Lebanese chapter of the Maccabean Club severed its connection with its parent branch in London.<sup>20</sup>

With the outbreak of war in Palestine in 1948, the Lebanese government took measures comparable to those taken by other Arab governments concerning aliens. Some were deported, while two hundred suspects were arrested. According to Reuter, they included only a few Jews.<sup>21</sup> Jewish institutions known for their Zionist connections, including the Maccabean Club, were closed.<sup>22</sup> Travel was limited to business trips. Since all these measures were security measures aimed at protecting the country in time of war,<sup>23</sup> the Lebanese Jews remained unaffected by any of them, and they continued in their business as usual.<sup>24</sup>

For their part, Lebanese Jews declared their loyalty to their country and condemned Zionist crimes against the Palestinians.<sup>25</sup> They also contributed 82,000 Lebanese pounds toward helping the Palestine cause.<sup>26</sup>

When the war was over, all the aforementioned precautionary measures were removed, non-Israeli Jews could enter the country, and Lebanese Jews could go abroad freely. A

(20) *Jewish Agency Report*, pp. 378-379.

(21) Landshut, p. 55.

(22) Schechtman, p. 174.

(23) The Government took precautionary measures, also aimed at protecting the Jewish quarter in Beirut.

(24) Landshut, p. 55.

(25) Schechtman, p. 176.

(26) *Ibid.*, p. 175; Landshut claims Jews donated 500,000 L.L., p. 55.

few who had indicated their wish to join their families in Israel were permitted to leave for Israel under the auspices of the Lebanese-Israeli Joint Armistice Committee.<sup>27</sup>

### C. CONDITIONS AFTER 1948

Actually, when A. Lilienthal visited Lebanon in 1954, he reported that the events of 1948 had left no aftereffects on Lebanese Jews either in terms of emigration or in terms of the attitude of the other Christians and Muslim population towards them.<sup>28</sup> Rabbi Berger<sup>29</sup> and B. Caine (Chairman of the Board of Education of the Blackpool League of Progressive Judaism)<sup>30</sup> who visited Lebanon, declared that they found a Jewish community living under extremely normal conditions, running its internal affairs freely and practicing its own religion openly.

Nineteen sixty-seven brought no changes into the lives of Lebanese Jews. All evidence points to the fact that they are prosperous and well-integrated into the larger Lebanese body.<sup>31</sup>

In January 1970, dynamite sticks were thrown against the Salime Trabe School in the Jewish quarter. The incident brought immediate and unqualified condemnation from all sources, including the Palestinians. The mysterious culprits

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(27) Schechtman, p. 178.

(28) *Council News* (January 1954).

(29) Berger, p. 54.

(30) *Jewish Chronicle* (8 November 1957).

(31) For details see Rudolf Chemili, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* (21 August 1969); and Hadassat Haim's article in the *Jerusalem Post* (12 September 1969).



were never apprehended, in spite of the efforts of the authorities. Consequently, conjectures concerning the motive behind the incident varied. Some quarters held that it was aimed at discrediting the Palestinian fedayyeen or at pushing the Lebanese government into repressing them; others felt that it was intended to frighten Lebanese Jews into emigrating to Israel.<sup>32</sup> It should be noted that this incident was the first in a series of explosions which had for their targets several leading newspapers of widely different political bearings.

1. *Economic Life.* Due to the policy of economic freedom to which Lebanon adheres, the Jews of Lebanon have retained their eminence to the point that nationalist elements are becoming alarmed. Through their control of the Beirut Stock Market, Jews have access to vital information about the Lebanese economy and they can affect Lebanese companies and business concerns.

Another aspect of Jewish economic activities which is causing concern in nationalist circles is that of land purchasing. Since 1948, certain Jewish families and companies in which Jews own stocks have acquired large tracts of land in the southwest of Lebanon, between Sidon and Tyre along the coastline, i.e. in the direction of Israel.<sup>33</sup>

There is also another suspicious trend which has appeared since 1965 among Jewish aliens, some of whom have acquired Lebanese nationality. Numerous cases of fraudulent bankruptcies involving Jews have cost Lebanese businessmen and

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(32) See *Al-Nahar* (21 January 1970); *Al-Muharrer* (20 January 1970); and *Al'Usbou al-Arabi* (26 January 1970).

(33) For details see *Al-Abad* (20 February 1966), *Al-Hurriya* (28 June 1965), and *Al-Hawadiith* (28 January 1966).

financiers several million Lebanese pounds.<sup>34</sup> Yet Jews continue to operate without governmental interference.

2. *Emigration.* Until 1958 large numbers of Syrian, Iraqi and Iranian Jews arrived in Lebanon.<sup>35</sup> Many had no intention of settling unless economic conditions were favorable. Consequently, events in the area which adversely affected the Lebanese economy, drove Jewish capitalists to seek better economic opportunities elsewhere, particularly after 1967.<sup>36</sup> They went to Mexico, Brazil, Canada, and Australia where they could gain higher profits than in the Middle East.

Lebanese Jews, on the whole, do not emigrate to Israel.<sup>37</sup> According to a leading Lebanese Jew, in addition to the discrimination from which Oriental Jews suffer, the general situation in Israel is unsettled and taxes are high.<sup>38</sup>

No exact figures as to the number of Jews in Lebanon are available at present. Ordinance No. 14987 of 31 December 1963 separates the Lebanese according to their sex, not religion. The Jewish Millah Council estimates them at five thousand of whom one thousand are aliens.

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(34) E.g. Emile Pichoti smuggled his money outside the country after the Beirut courts declared him bankrupt. He left debts worth three million L.L. *Al-Kifab* (27 May 1965). Also David Mizrahi and his family from Tripoli withdrew their money from banks and left for Brazil taking with them many newly-purchased valuables for which they had paid by checks dated one day after the date on which they intended to leave. They left behind them, in addition, a considerable amount of unsettled debts; *Al-Hayat* (20 January 1966) and *Al-Nahar* (21 January 1966).

(35) Schechtman estimates that Jews numbered 11,000 persons that year, p. 178.

(36) *Ibid.*, p. 182.

(37) *Ibid.*, p. 182.

(38) *Al-Hawadeth* (20 February 1970).

## V

### JEWS OF THE ARAB PENINSULA

#### A. JEWS OF YEMEN

1. *Historical Note.* The Jewish community in Yemen is considered the oldest in the world outside Palestine. Its origins are hidden in myth. But it is known that large Jewish communities have existed in Yemen since the third century A.D. where conditions were flourishing and where the Jews enjoyed a great deal of influence to the extent that they converted many of the southern tribes of the Arab peninsula to Judaism.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the fact that many were converted to Islam in the wake of the Arab conquest, the Jews remained a large religious community, unlike the Christians who either assimilated in the Muslim community or emigrated to Ethiopia. Their number increased further with the influx of some Jewish tribes from the Hijaz, and other groups who arrived in the company of the Portuguese on their way to India, or who followed the Mamluks from Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

No particular information has come to light about the Jews in Yemen under the Zaydite Imamate, except that they welcomed the Ottoman domination over Yemen in the hope of improving their lot under the new Turkish rule, although they had been generally favored by the ruling Yemenite dy-

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(1) Schechtman, p. 34.

(2) Landshut, p. 77.

nasty for their skill in striking coins and in commerce.<sup>3</sup> But the consecutive uprisings in Yemen and the unsettled Ottoman rule there caused conditions to deteriorate. Like the rest of the population, Jews suffered from the prevailing chaos, particularly in that they needed stability because of their economic position.

2. *Population.* There is conflicting information about the number of Jews in Yemen before their exodus in 1949. The figures vary from a little over 12,000 (Y. Zemach) to 100,000 (Massignon). The most reasonable estimate is 60,000 to 70,000 persons of whom 8,000 lived in San'a.<sup>4</sup> The rate of growth of this Jewish community was very low, notwithstanding early marriage, polygamy and a high birth rate. It should be noted, however, that in this respect they did not differ from the rest of the population in Yemen, because of recurrent unrest and famine.

Slightly built, dark-skinned and black-haired, Yemenite Jews were indistinguishable anthropologically from the rest of the indigenous population. They looked Semitic, but some had foreign features owing to their mixture with other racial groups such as the Ethiopians.<sup>5</sup>

3. *Social Life.* The Jews of Yemen lived in the principal towns and villages scattered on the internal plateau. They preferred to live apart from their Muslim neighbors in separate villages in the countryside, and in their own quarters

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(3) S. Strisower, *Exotic Jewish Communities* (London, 1962).

(4) Ahmad Fakhry, *Al-Yaman: Madiha wa Hadiraha* [Yemen, past and present], (Cairo, 1957), pp. 34-37.

(5) Strisower, p. 27.

in the towns, although they were allowed to own houses and shops and acquire real estate anywhere in the country.<sup>6</sup>

Jewish townspeople claimed their descent from the most noble families in the Holy Land and looked down upon the Jewish villagers as the descendants of slaves or of vanquished tribes.

In outside appearance, Yemenite Jews did not differ from the rest of the indigenous population, particularly in the villages, except for their side curls and sometimes their skull caps. The Jewish woman was not veiled and often helped her husband in his trade.

4. *Religious Life and Organization.* The status of Jews in Yemen was prescribed by Muslim Shari'a. Their status as *Ahl al-Thimma* (People of the Book) remained unchanged. They enjoyed a considerable degree of independence in running the internal affairs of the community, along with all the privileges granted to minorities, such as the protection of their lives and property, in return for taxes paid to the government. Jews fared well under this system. In addition, those living among Yemenite tribes enjoyed further protection in accordance with the tribal system in the country.<sup>7</sup> Some Jewish citizens reached positions of influence through which they were able to benefit their community.<sup>8</sup>

Jews elected two officers. The first, called Nasi, was a man of wealth and learning who represented his community to the government. The second, called Mori, performed the functions of Chief Rabbi, judge, teacher, and tax collector.

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(6) Fakhry, *ibid.*

(7) Fakhry, *ibid.*

(8) Landshut, p. 73.

Jewish religious life was based on the Talmud. Their children received religious instruction; the more promising ones studied Hebrew in classrooms adjoining synagogues.

5. *Economic Life.* Yemenite Jews specialized in handicrafts. They monopolized many industries mainly goldsmithing, pottery, whitewashing houses, embroidery, making ornaments and fine clothes, weaving, and manufacturing soap, arms and chains. Gold- and silversmiths were held in high esteem for their fashioning of fine jewelry. Jews monopolized also the import-export business. They were, thus, able to control most aspects of economic life in Yemen.<sup>9</sup>

The 1947 Jewish Agency Report on the conditions of Oriental Jewish communities to the Anglo-American Committee held that the government in Yemen had constructed soap and textile factories and had ordered Jewish skilled laborers to teach these skills to the Muslim population in the hope of eliminating the dependence of the country on Jews.<sup>10</sup> These allegations have not been confirmed by any other source.

6. *Emigration.* In fact, Jews remained in control of most of the aspects of economic life in Yemen until their mass emigration in 1949-1950. Their status in the country had not been affected by any of the political events that accompanied the Palestine question. No measures had been taken against Jews, nor had any acts of violence been directed against them. Their emigration was voluntary. They were influenced by Zionist pressures and propaganda.

It must be recalled that the emigration of the Jews of

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(9) Landshut, p. 74; Schechtman, p. 43; Fakhry, pp. 34-38.

(10) *Jewish Agency Report*, p. 381.

Yemen to Palestine went back to the 1880s due to religious fervor and to their belief, at the time, in the imminent return of the Messiah.<sup>11</sup> The direct call for emigration, however, came from A. Ruppin, head of the Palestine Office which the World Zionist Organization had established in Jaffa in 1908 for bringing a Yemenite Jewish community to replace the Arab agricultural laborers in Zionist settlements. The Zionist leaders succeeded in influencing large numbers of Yemenite Jews to immigrate to Palestine. During the years 1917-1948, about 15,360 persons, or 3.8 percent of the total number of Jewish immigrants emigrated from Yemen. Most of the Yemenite travelers passed through the British colony of Aden. It was from the British authorities there that the Jewish Agency provided them with permits to enter Palestine.<sup>12</sup>

After the establishment of the State of Israel, Imam Ahmad, the ruler of Yemen, permitted his Jewish subjects to leave for Palestine.<sup>13</sup> Agents of the Jewish Agency spread throughout the country calling for emigration and organizing it in absolute secrecy. Many Jews from Yemen, 47,140, were transported to Israel in what was called "Operation Magic Carpet," in 430 flights between 1949 and 1950.

The number of Jews who have remained in Yemen, if any, is not known. It was reported in 1968 that very few

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(11) Ben-Zvi, p. 31.

(12) *Jewish Agency Report*, p. 376.

(13) Neither the motives of the Imam nor the formula under which Jews were permitted to leave have ever come to light. It is rumored that a number of San'a Jews petitioned the Imam concerning the subject. He wrote in the margin "No objection." B.W. Seager mentioned in a lecture delivered before the Royal Central Asian Society that Israel is grateful to the Imam for not having placed any obstacles in the face of the mass emigration of Yemeni Jews; see Schechtman, p. 69.

Jews still lived in distant villages in the north. It was also reported that these people were not being persecuted on political or religious grounds, and that some of them were receiving an Arab education.<sup>14</sup>

## B. JEWS OF ADEN

1. *Historical Note.* The origin of the Jews of the British colony of Aden probably goes back to Yemen. Some were descendants of Jewish settlers who had arrived in Aden while on their way to Yemen from ports on the Mediterranean Sea. It is certain that some Jews had lived in Aden since the fifth century A.D.

The exact size of the Jewish community in Aden is not known. But their number did exceed 4,700 persons. The remaining Jews were Yemenites on their way to Palestine.<sup>15</sup>

Most Adeni Jews lived in Crater, a quarter composed of six streets. A Jewish religious council directed the affairs of the community. They spoke Arabic but wrote it in Hebrew script. The youth also knew Hebrew as well as English.<sup>16</sup>

2. *Economic and Social Life.* A group of Jews (such as the Messa family known as the coffee kings) were in obvious control of most of the economic institutions in the area. For example, they monopolized the ostrich feather trade, exporting it to all parts of the world. They also inherited, after the

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(14) *New York Times* (24 September 1968).

(15) As estimated by *Institute of Jewish Affairs* (London, June 1967), Jews in Aden numbered 7000 persons before 1947.

(16) Schechtman, p. 77.



Second World War, a great deal of the Italian economic influence in the area.

The remaining Jews in Aden were, on the whole, very poor. They earned their living from small crafts and a number of them held administrative jobs in government offices. As to those who had immigrated from Yemen, they worked mostly as porters and construction workers, or continued in the craft they had in Yemen.

3. *Conditions Before 1948.* The Jewish community was on good neighborly relations with the inhabitants of the area, although the constant influx of Jews from Yemen led to some strain in these relations. For this reason neither the British Administration in Aden nor the members of the Jewish community there expected any serious troubles in the wake of the UN resolution to partition Palestine. Troubles, however, began suddenly in early December 1947 when the leaders of Aden declared a general strike in support of the Arabs of Palestine. The demonstrations which had begun to protest against Zionism turned, through popular unrestraint, to attack the Jewish quarter in Crater and Sheikh Othman. Eighty-two Jews were killed and 76 injured, while 38 Muslims were killed and 87 injured. The exact causes of these bloody events were not determined. The Muslims may have been reacting against the obvious antagonism which pro-Zionist Jews had been encouraged to assume against their compatriots by Jewish Agency representatives in the area and who were relying on the fact that the British Administration would protect them.<sup>17</sup> A Zionist report claims that the events were spurred by economic factors

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(17) *Al-Thawrah al-Arabiyyah Daily* (6 December 1965).

and were aimed at removing the influence which the Jewish community enjoyed in Aden.<sup>18</sup>

4. *Conditions After 1948.* After 1948, the position of the Jews in Aden began to deteriorate due to the fact that the area was witnessing the beginnings of the national struggle for independence. By 1965, only 38 families remained in Aden for business reasons, but they maintained their residence in England. Nevertheless, an eyewitness describing the situation in 1965 in the *Jewish Chronicle* (19 February 1965) showed that Jews still had a great deal of influence in Aden. The first store the visitor saw, wrote the eyewitness, was Miramar whose owner was a Jew. Most of the other important stores, such as Champion Stores and Central Stores were Jewish concerns. So were the most important hotels such as Rock Hotel, Grand Hotel and Victoria Hotel.

It seems that the British authorities in Aden made use of the free market and port to encourage the importation of Israeli goods. 'Made in Israel' was conspicuously displayed on merchandise in the market. To counter this, a national committee was formed to alert Adenites to the necessity of boycotting Israeli goods.<sup>19</sup>

As the date for the withdrawal of the British troops from Aden approached, the head of the Anglo-Jewish Association, Harold Montefiore, called upon the Jews in Aden to wind up their affairs there, and promised to help those who wished to settle in England.<sup>20</sup> The last 132 Jews left

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(18) Schechtman, pp. 89-90.

(19) *Al-Thawrah al-Arabiyyah Daily* (6 December 1965).

(20) *Palestine Daily* (20 May 1966).

Aden on 18 June 1967. Eighty persons went to England; the rest chose to go to Israel.<sup>21</sup>

### C. *JEWES OF BAHRAIN*

A small Jewish community settled in Bahrain in the 1880s when the area became a British protectorate. The seventy families who lived there in 1947 came from Iraq, Persia and India. Like the rest of the Jews in the Arab peninsula, these people lived in peace with their Muslim neighbors. Ten families were very rich, thirteen lived on charity and the rest earned their living as merchants and small handicraftsmen.

When Bahrain became a stage for violent demonstrations in support of the Palestinians, the Jews there felt threatened. By 1967 only fifteen families remained. More have left for England since the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war, though no incidents occurred to cause them to depart.<sup>22</sup>

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(21) London *Times* (21 May 1967). The leading Jewish citizen in Aden, B. Messa, wrote to the World Jewish Congress that they had donated all the Mosaic Canonical law manuscripts (he did not mention to whom) and had left their synagogues as memorials of the Jewish community there. In 1968 a certain Abdullah Awad Salem told the *New York Times* correspondent (24 September 1968) that he and three women still lived in Aden.

(22) Between 2600 and 2750 Jews lived in some of the Sheikdoms, Sultanates and Emirates of East and West Aden known as the Aden Protectorates. Very little is known about them except that they shared the life of their Arab neighbors and constituted the bulk of the skilled hands in the area. They all left on Operation Magic Carpet driven by a force incomprehensible to them; Landshut, p. 72; and Schechtman, pp. 81-83.



## VI

### JEWES OF EGYPT

#### A. CONDITIONS UNTIL 1950

1. *Historical Note.* It is historically established that Jews have inhabited Egypt since the sixth century B.C.

When the Arabs established their rule over Egypt, the lot of Jewry improved like never before.<sup>1</sup> Then under the Ottomans in the sixteenth century, they profited so from the system of capitulations, that the ranks of the Jewish indigenous elements began to swell with waves of Sephardim Jews from other eastern regions. The Jewish community thrived still further under Mohammed Ali's dynasty in the nineteenth century. Government protection which spurred the development of the community encouraged more Jews from Europe (Ashkenazim) to immigrate to Egypt.<sup>2</sup> Still more Ashkenazim arrived when the country fell under British occupation.

In 1948, an estimated 75,000 to 80,000 Jews lived in Egypt. Of these, 30,000 held foreign nationalities (Italian, French, Greek, British and Persian), and 40,000 were stateless.<sup>3</sup> Only 5,000 were Egyptian citizens. The reason so many

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(1) *The Jewish Chronicle* (17 July 1964); and Schechtman, p. 185.

(2) See Maurice Fargeon, *Les Juifs en Egypte depuis les origines jusqu'à ce jour* [The Jews in Egypt: from their beginning until today], (Cairo, 1938), pp. 160-168.

(3) They either came from states which no longer existed such as Serbia and Lithuania, or had dropped their German and Austro-Hungarian nationalities in 1914-1918, or had entered the country without valid documents. J. André, "Death of a Community: Egypt's Vanishing Jewry" *World Jewry* (April, 1958), p. 16.

Egyptian Jews held foreign nationalities (some had never seen the country whose passport they carried) lies in that they had sought to profit from the privileges provided under the system of capitulations. This system granted them, among other things, the protection of foreign consuls—it released them from appearing before Egyptian courts and gave them the right to present their cases to the mixed courts.

2. *Legal Status and Religious Organization.* The well-known Millah system of the Ottomans was given legal status under Law VIII, 1915. Under this law, every Millah (or religious group) was given a council empowered to run matters pertaining to personal status in accordance with the religious practices of the community. The 1923 constitution gave minority groups further guarantees by recognizing their political rights too.<sup>4</sup> Rabbinite Jews were organized into two communities, one in Cairo and the other in Alexandria.<sup>5</sup> Each had its own rabbi. But whereas Alexandria had one elected general council, Cairo had two: one for Ashkenazim and one for Sephardim Jews.

3. *Economic Life.* Since the second half of the nineteenth century, when a developing Egypt grew in need of qualified people, Jews, along with the Europeans who began to pour into the country, occupied an important position in the Egyptian economy. Partly, because of their relative higher standard of education but mostly because of their connections with

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(4) Several proposals towards further legislation were met with strong opposition by the religious minorities themselves who preferred the Millah system; Hourani, pp. 41-42.

(5) Five thousand Karaites lived in Cairo. The government did not recognize that Karaites constituted a minority group; for details see *Jewish Chronicle* (9 June 1961).

Europeans, vast opportunities for work opened up for them. Their activities included all economic fields: commerce, finance, industry, etc. Eventually, several Jewish capitalist families were able to control the economy of the country for a long while. Thus in 1942, Jewish capitalists controlled 103 companies out of a total 308 and had large interests in banks and other concerns. These companies employed Jews from the managers down to the typists.<sup>6</sup>

In the field of finance, Jews made a contribution by establishing and directing banks and credit companies.<sup>7</sup> In the field of agriculture, they formed a number of companies for the acquisition of agricultural land, its development and its use in speculative deals. They established related industries and real estate companies which also sought to profit from farming land.<sup>8</sup> Jews were similarly very active in the real estate business and the public utilities business. Jewish capital went also to finance the sugar and cotton industries and a variety of light industries.

(6) André, p. 16.

(7) Tal'at Harb, founder of the Bank of Egypt, gives an example of how the Egyptian population fell victim to the sophisticated and ruthless practices of non-Egyptian financiers. In 1880 the Egyptian Bank of Real Estate was established by three leading Jewish money-lenders, Sawaresse, Rouleau and Quattari with French backing. By the end of the first year, one third of the cultivated land in Egypt was mortgaged; *'Ilage Misr al-Iktisadi* [The economic remedy of Egypt], 1910, as quoted in the weekly *Al-Musawwar* (7 May 1949).

(8) For example, the Semouhas who came from Manchester in 1917, bought a marshy farming area in Sidi Jabr near Alexandria. In 1930 they formed a company to dry the 425 faddans (or one sixth of the area of Alexandria). The company built suburban villas on part of the land and planted orchards on the rest; *Jewish Chronicle* (24 August 1956).

Jews, in addition, ran a large number of individually owned businesses.<sup>9</sup> Many worked as professionals.

But as the country gained greater independence in 1936, national feeling too developed to greater dimensions. The number of educated young Egyptians from the middle class and the number of city workers were also increasing. On the other hand, foreigners who had controlled Egypt's economy for three generations and who, thus, represented the exploiting class, had supported Britain throughout its occupation of Egypt. It was, therefore, inevitable that all these factors should cause national feelings to turn specifically against these foreigners.

For its part the government took several legal steps aimed at correcting conditions. New laws increased government control over foreign companies and the projects they operated. They also expanded the number of Egyptians employed in foreign concerns. The most important regulation was the Corporate Law of July 29, 1947. It stipulated that 75 percent of the employees and 90 percent of the workers in any concern (be it Egyptian or foreign) had to be Egyptian citizens.<sup>10</sup>

One can imagine the effects the application of the above-mentioned law had on the Jews living in Egypt when one considers that of all the Jewish residents in Egypt only 5,000

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(9) Abu Kaff and Ghnaim, *Al-Yahud wal-Haraka al-Sahyouniyah fi Misr 1917-1947* [The Jews and the Zionist movement in Egypt 1917-1947] (Cairo, 1969).

Further details of the economic activities of Jews in Egypt can be found in the issues of the *Jewish Chronicle* after 1956 when large numbers of Jews left the country. The following is one example of such activity: Maurice Levi and his five brothers owned a number of factories producing various items such as chocolate, chewing gum and carpets; *Jewish Chronicle* (15 March 1957).

(10) Hourani, p. 43.



were Egyptian citizens.<sup>11</sup> The steps taken by the Egyptian administration in order to limit foreign influence, thus, undermined the economic position of the Jews as well. Nevertheless, the Jewish Agency Report presented to the Anglo-American Committee in 1947 conceded that Jews had retained their influence on the economic life of Egypt.

4. *Social Life.* The Jews in Egypt were divided into three distinct social classes. The aristocracy, to whom one belonged by birth, comprised some of the wealthiest families in Egypt, well-known also for their high status in the whole Egyptian society and their personal connections with the Egyptian upper classes. Further down came the bourgeoisie which comprised a large number of wealthy businessmen, professionals and a huge number of persons employed mostly in the business sector. They were mostly new immigrants who strove to compete with the aristocracy over influence and prestige among members of the Jewish community.

The two groups led a separate social life from the rest of the indigenous population; they were, in fact, Frenchified.<sup>12</sup> This tendency affected their mode of living and their attitude towards their host country. This phenomenon became more pronounced as more European Jews arrived during the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup>

The lower classes were mostly indigenous Jews who lived in Cairo. There were about 9,800 of them. They were indistin-

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(11) Other regulations ruled that companies had to do their bookkeeping and correspondence in Arabic. This further limited Jewish clerks since most of them were not proficient in that language.

(12) See next section — "Education and Cultural Life."

(13) Landshut, p. 28; and André, p. 16.

guishable from other Egyptians of the same socio-economic background. The majority worked as small craftsmen or peddlers. They spoke Arabic and lived in ignorance, many on charity. Four thousand persons received aid from Jewish charitable institutions.<sup>14</sup> But on the whole, the lower class Jews did not experience the extreme poverty of the rest of the Egyptian masses.

5. *Education and Cultural Life.* Jewish schools were either private or philanthropic institutions; they profited from donations by wealthy Jews as well as from government grants.<sup>15</sup> Programs were wholly European. The language of instruction was French, and English was a compulsory subject.<sup>16</sup> Some schools offered commerce courses and secretarial training. There were also vocational training centers geared towards creating technical skills.

Jewish newspapers and periodicals expressed the opinions and interests of the community. Some were pronouncedly Zionist oriented.<sup>17</sup>

As their interest in Palestine increased, the Jews in Egypt began to direct their efforts towards reviving Hebrew culture. Between 1925-1935, they established several institutions for promoting the knowledge of Hebrew, such as "The Hebrew Club." They also formed the society of "The Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem."<sup>18</sup>

6. *Public Role of Jews.* Although the Jews in Egypt played

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(14) Schechtman, p. 186.

(15) Abu Kaff and Ghnaim, pp. 35-38; and Fargeon, pp. 180-182.

(16) Schechtman, p. 186.

(17) Abu Kaff and Ghnaim, pp. 39-40; and Fargeon, pp. 181-182.

(18) *Ibid.*

a prominent role in the economic life of the country as a community, they did not participate in political affairs, partly because a large number were not citizens and partly because their condition was satisfactory.<sup>19</sup> As individuals, though, they were active in the public life of Egypt. They held ministerial offices, they were elected to Parliament and appointed to the Senate, in addition to the various important positions they had in the Administration. In the post First World War years, some leading Jews became prominent in the national movement, particularly in the Wafd party. The following are but a few: Attorney Leon Castro, the well-known Chief Editor of the anti-British daily *La Liberté*, became the Wafd spokesman in Europe. He accompanied Sa'ad Zaghloul to the London Anglo-Egyptian negotiations for independence. Joseph Pasha Quattawi, leader of the Cairo Jewish community until his death in 1943, was a member of the Committee of the Thirty which Abdul-Khaleq Sarwat formed in 1922 to draft the Egyptian constitution and the electoral law. He became Minister of Finance (1925) and a member of the Senate (1927-31). Joseph di Picciotto was one of the prominent Wafd leaders in Alexandria. He was elected to the first Wafdist Parliament (1927) and was known for his opposition of the British occupation.<sup>20</sup>

7. *Relations with the Rest of the Indigenous Population.* On both the national and personal levels, the Jews were linked to the other Egyptians by friendly ties. There was no anti-Jewish feelings as such. Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum used his

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(19) Hourani, p. 56.

(20) Landshut, p. 28; and *Jewish Chronicle* (7 December 1956 and 13 January 1961).

personal connections with the leading Egyptian personalities to improve the standard of the community.<sup>21</sup>

Until the end of the Second World War, the idea of tension rising between the Jews and the rest of the Egyptian population seemed far fetched. But the growing impetus of nationalist feeling which demanded the reestablishment of Egyptian sovereignty, the evacuation of British garrisons<sup>22</sup> and the abolishment of foreign concessions went further than that. It began to oppose all that was foreign. Since wealthy Jews were considered to be an aspect of the British invasion, then it was natural that they should draw the attention of nationalists, even before the eruption of the Palestine problem, in their capacity as foreigners; for the Western world, as the Egyptians believed, was at the root of the evil in the Arab world, not the Jews.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, the indigenous Jewish minority whose roots went deep into Egypt's history was powerful and its links to all aspects of life in the country were firm. In addition, the personal connections of the upper class Jews with the Muslim and Coptic upper classes were friendly. The events in Palestine had no effect on their daily life.<sup>24</sup>

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(21) For example, the celebration of the eight hundredth anniversary of Memonedes was placed under the auspices of King Fuad and the expenses incurred were paid by the Egyptian government, the Egyptian School of Medicine and the Academy of Arabic Language. Bashan, "Jews Plight in Arab Countries," *Israel Magazine*, Vol. I, No. 9 (1968), p. 5.

(22) The sight of a British or American military uniform was enough to arouse popular anger. A police officer informed a member of the Anglo-American Committee visiting Cairo (1946) that this feeling had no connection with the Egyptians' relationship to the Jews; see Crum, p. 147.

(23) Crum, p. 150.

(24) Landshut, p. 32; and André, p. 16.

8. *The Jews of Egypt and the Palestine Question.* Since ancient times, Egyptian Jews had had strong religious and commercial ties with Palestine. The Zionist movement used the situation to spread its influence among the Jews in Egypt. In the years preceding the First World War, the World Zionist Organization began to sponsor lectures, meetings and rallies in support of its aims.<sup>25</sup> When the war was over, Zionist activities increased. Zionist youth organizations were formed, Macabian clubs were opened and the Jewish community in Alexandria donated thirteen thousand Egyptian guineas towards purchasing land in Palestine for the settlement of Jewish emigrants from Germany in 1936. Weizmann and Jabotinsky visited Egypt for the purpose of spreading the Zionist idea among Jews there. The two intensified their efforts while the Jewish Legion in the British Army (Palmach) was stationed in Egypt during the Second World War.<sup>26</sup> It is worth noting here that, in spite of the Zionist efforts, until 1948 only 1,845 persons had emigrated to Palestine.<sup>27</sup>

But as Zionist activities became more widespread, there appeared among some Jewish Egyptian young people a counter-current led by Quattawi Pasha himself.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, there appeared an Arab reaction to the Zionist activities which led to a strain in Arab-Jewish relations<sup>29</sup> in the aftermath of a demonstration on the occasion of the anni-

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(25) Ghnaim and Abu Kaff, pp. 20-24.

(26) Bashan, p. 5.

(27) Schechtman, p. 191.

(28) Crum, pp. 156-157.

(29) It was reported that the Young Egypt Society had demanded that the Jewish community take a stand against Zionism or be accused of collaboration with the enemy; Landshut, p. 32.

versary of the Balfour Declaration. Violence had broken out during that demonstration, but it was directed as well against aliens, irrespective of nationality or creed. The event left no lasting effects. And when the Jewish Agency reported to the Anglo-American Committee, it stated that Jews in Egypt were living in safety.<sup>30</sup> Until fighting broke out in May 1948, the situation remained uneventful although feelings ran high in Egypt, as elsewhere in the Arab world, when the Palestine case was brought up before the United Nations.

When the Palestine War (1948) started, martial law was declared. The Prime Minister was given full powers and security measures such as the following were taken: persons wishing to leave the country had to obtain exit visas; persons under arrest or surveillance and persons residing abroad who engaged in acts that threatened the security of the state had their property confiscated; persons accused of Zionist activities were detained or placed under house arrest. These measures were also directed against non-Jewish Egyptian citizens and aliens who opposed the government, such as the communists.

For their part, leading Egyptian Jews, particularly members of Parliament, expressed their loyalty to their country and their opposition to Zionism. Rabbi Nahum called upon Egyptian Jews to assist the Arabs of Palestine and the Army. Cairo Jews donated 160,000 dollars and Alexandria Jews 80,000 dollars (*New York Times*, 18 May, 1948).

The only acts of violence reported during that period were the incidents which broke out in the Jewish quarter in Cairo on June 20, 1948 and the attacks against some Jewish as well as non-Jewish stores on that day. Actually, behind

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(30) *Jewish Agency Report.*

whatever occurred in 1948 lay hidden factors, none of which stemmed directly from any deeply-rooted anti-Jewish feelings. The course of events clearly indicated that the unrest in the country against Jews, the majority of whom were aliens, was indistinguishable from the general anti-imperialist sentiments in Egypt.<sup>31</sup>

But the relentless efforts of the Jewish Agency and other Zionist organizations in bringing Jews to Israel inevitably left their mark. When the travel restrictions were lifted in 1949, Jews settled their affairs and wound up their businesses. It was reported that between August and November of that year, more than 27,000 persons left the country carrying with them vast sums of money and large amounts of belongings. Only 7268 persons, however, went to Israel; the rest travelled to France and Italy.<sup>32</sup>

### B. CONDITIONS FROM 1950-1956

With the return to normalcy, the Jews flourished again, particularly when the sequestered property was returned.

In 1952 the Egyptian revolution took place. The new leaders emphasized the principles of equality between all Egyptians irrespective of race or creed. Believing in the distinction between Judaism and Zionism, they maintained friendly relations with the Chief Rabbi and often visited the main synagogue in Cairo.<sup>33</sup> When the committee for drafting the new constitution was formed in January 1953, the Jewish

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(31) Landshut, p. 39.

(32) Schechtman, p. 192. Ben-Zvi wrote an article in *Maariv* about the Karaites in which he mentioned that they had gone to Israel in accordance with the Law of Return, not because of any persecution; *Jewish Chronicle* (9 June 1961).

(33) J. Gunther, *Inside Africa*, Vol. II, p. 7.

lawyer, Zaki al-'Uraibi, was appointed to represent his community on the committee. The new constitution, approved in 1956, recognized religious, personal and political freedom within the limitations of the law.<sup>34</sup> The outmoded Millah system was modernized—all matters pertaining to personal status were brought directly under the government's jurisdiction and the old religious courts were abolished.<sup>35</sup>

American Jews who visited Egypt at the time found no evidence of the Zionist allegations concerning Egypt's maltreatment of its Jewish citizens. Rabbi Elmer Burger (Chairman of the American Council for Judaism) was assured in a private interview with Rabbi Nahum at which no Egyptian official was present, that Jews were safe and free and that members of the community were contributing in the efforts of the new revolutionary government. He added that he had been invited to participate in the flag-raising ceremony in the Suez Canal after the evacuation of the British garrison.<sup>36</sup>

Rabbi Burger found 50,000 Jews living under favorable circumstances in spite of the social and economic difficulties the country was facing as a result of the failures of the old regime. But Rabbi Burger discovered also the pressure tactics Zionist agents were exercising on Egyptian Jews who were mostly merchants and bankowners, through their commercial agents in Europe. Most Egyptian Jews were not interested in immigrating to Israel. Those who had, were mostly poor peo-

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(34) A.-R. al-Rafi'i, *Thawrat Yulyu 1952* [The July 1952 Revolution] (Cairo, 1959), pp. 66, 74, 214.

(35) *Jewish Chronicle* (25 June 1956) and "Jews in Egypt," *Council News* (January-February, 1957).

(36) The testimonies of Chicorelle and Elia Cohen are to the same effect; for details see Burger, pp. 11-24.



ple who, hoping to better their conditions, had believed Zionist propaganda. But since the revolution the number of those wishing to leave had dwindled, particularly since news of the discrimination against Oriental Jews had begun to reach them.

### C. CONDITIONS FROM 1956-1967

1. *Jews During the 1956 Crisis.* Subsequent to the tripartite aggression against Egypt (October 1956), an anti-Egyptian campaign was launched. Tel Aviv, Paris and London accused Egypt of persecuting and deporting Jews. The general situation as the Egyptian authorities described it was due to the fact that alien Jews had collaborated with the invading forces in Port Said. When the forces of occupation withdrew, these Jews, fearing reprisals, left too. Others, known Zionist sympathisers and dangerous elements, were either deported or detained. In addition, the movable and immovable property of these persons was placed under government guardianship in order to prevent the smuggling of capital outside the country.

Reporting on the situation, the American Embassy in Cairo said that Egyptian Jews enjoyed all the rights of citizenship, that French and British Jews were treated as subjects of enemy countries, and that other alien Jews were treated like their fellow citizens.<sup>37</sup>

As a result of the 1956 crisis, an estimated 25,000 persons left Egypt between the end of that year and the middle

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(37) The findings of the American Council for Judaism, and of F. Stark, who wrote a series of articles on the results of his fact-finding trip to Egypt in Scripps-Howard chain of newspapers, corroborate the report of the American Embassy. *Council News* (February 1957).

of 1957. Of these, 14,000 were French nationals, 8,000 were British and the remaining 3,000 were stateless.<sup>38</sup>

2. *The Jews After the 1956 Crisis.* Once the crisis was over, the number of people leaving the country dropped considerably, although the authorities imposed no restrictions on those who wished to emigrate, particularly if they were aliens.

The relations between the Jewish community and the rest of the population remained good. The Jewish religious council continued to look after the internal affairs of the community. Jews went on performing their religious rites as usual. The practice of sending an official representative to attend Jewish religious feasts was maintained. The customary invitations extended to religious representatives included the Chief Rabbi. The community reiterated its loyalty to the country and its opposition to Zionism and Israel.<sup>39</sup> Egyptian Jews were still called to do their military service at the age of eighteen like other Egyptian citizens.

The economic life of Jews during that period became an integral part of the general economic condition in the country. Nationalization laws and socialist measures touched Jewish concerns too,<sup>40</sup> while ordinary Jews led normal lives doing their work as usual.

It was these economic restrictions, rather than Zionist propaganda, that led alien Jews to leave the country. These people generally went to the U.S.A. by way of Paris.

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(38) "Jews in the Arab Countries During the Middle East Crisis," *Institute of Jewish Affairs* (London, June 1957); no exact figures can be given because many held multiple nationalities.

(39) See *Jewish Chronicle* (15 April 1960, 22 January 1962, 6 August 1963); and Schechtman, p. 202.

(40) *Jewish Chronicle* (4 March 1961).

## D. CONDITIONS AFTER 1967

Zionist anti-Arab propaganda pictures the lot of the 2500-3000 Jews remaining in Egypt as deplorable. But the Egyptian government has repeatedly denied that it is so. Chief Rabbi Duwaik has declared that Jews are Egyptian citizens who have the same rights and duties as other citizens without discrimination. Some of those arrested (500 Egyptian Jews and non-Jews) have been released and have either left the country according to their own wishes or have gone back to their jobs.<sup>41</sup> The 90 persons who were still detained (in 1969) were not imprisoned because they refused to be drafted but because they constitute a security hazard owing to their pro-Israeli activities.<sup>42</sup>

The Jewish community continues to lead a normal life. Its members do not live in separate quarters. They continue in their professions as doctors, engineers, pharmacists, etc. Jews practice their religion freely. Synagogues are lit every Friday evening and a presidential representative assists at special ceremonies. The community runs two schools (one in Alexandria and one in Cairo) which are attended by students from all faiths. There are no discriminatory laws in Egypt against Jews—they carry no special markings on their identity cards, they are subject to the same draft law (unless they are aliens), etc. Jews can emigrate if they wish, for they can easily obtain exit visas. However, Oriental Jews realize that political Zionism has created a lot of problems for them. Until the establishment of the State of Israel there was no Jewish

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(41) *Daily Star* (20 August 1968).

(42) *Daily Star* (16 February 1969).

question in the East.<sup>43</sup> Leading Arab Jews have repeatedly expressed their annoyance with the Israeli practice of assuming the role of official spokesman for them. They have often found themselves in the awkward position of having to reaffirm their loyalty to their countries especially when Zionist fund-raising campaigners step up their anti-Arab propaganda.<sup>44</sup>

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### JEWS OF SUDAN

The first Jew to settle in the Sudan was an Ottoman subject, Ben Zion Costi, who had arrived with General Gordon's army. He was converted to Islam during the revolt of the Mahdi against Britain; but he reverted to Judaism when Ketchner recaptured the Sudan in 1898. Other Middle Eastern Jews followed, mostly from Egypt, with whom they still maintain strong ties.

In 1957 Dr. Michael Barnett visited the Sudan. He found a small community (350 Jews) living in Khartum, Wad Medani and Port Sudan. Some held important positions in the Administration. Their children went to school in Egypt (Victoria College mostly) and England. The community had a club and a synagogue, which was built in 1926 through the contributions of a wealthy Egyptian and some British donors in response to an advertisement placed in the *Jewish Chronicle*. The community leader, Habib Cohen, and his predecessor, David Gaon, were held in high esteem by the Sudanese.<sup>45</sup>

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(43) *Daily Telegraph* (14 April 1970); and Rudolph Chemili's article in *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* (21 August 1969) as quoted in *Al-Nahar Sunday Supplement* (7 September 1969).

(44) See, for example, statements of Rabbi Nahum and others quoted in *Council News* (February 1957); Elia Cohen's report; Chicorelle and Rabbi Nahum quoted by Burger, pp. 11-24.

(45) *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 January 1957.

## VII

### JEWS OF LIBYA

#### A. CONDITIONS BEFORE 1938

1. *Historical Note.* Jews existed in Libya as early as the Phoenician colonization. The majority of the present inhabitants are descendants of Jews who took refuge in Libya from Spanish persecution in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In 1835 the country became part of the Ottoman Empire and the Jews enjoyed the usual amount of autonomy under the Millah system. In 1885, 7,500 Jews lived in flourishing conditions; by 1909, their number had increased to 14,000.

When the country fell under Italian domination in 1911, the Jews were permitted to exercise their full political, religious, economic and civil rights.<sup>1</sup> They enjoyed a better standard of living than the rest of the indigenous population. In the opinion of some observers, the Italians were trying to woo the Jewish minority away from their Arab neighbors.<sup>2</sup> Their number rose to 25,103 in 1931, then to 30,000 in 1938. They lived mostly in Tripoli and Bengazi.

2. *Religious Life and Organization.* The Jewish community continued to enjoy its independence in matters pertaining to its internal affairs. But the Jewish religious council was ap-

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(1) Schechtman, p. 87.

(2) Landshut, p. 127; under Italian jurisdiction, Jews were divided into three categories: Italian citizens, Libyan citizens of the Mosaic faith, and aliens.

pointed by the Italian authorities and its jurisdiction did not extend over matters of inheritance.

The system remained in effect during the years of British occupation.

3. *Education.* A high percentage of Jewish students went to government schools; the rest received religious instruction or went to private schools such as those run by the Alliance Israélite Universelle. In 1938-39, 4035 Jewish students went to government schools, 1303 attended private schools and 1746 received Jewish instruction in Talmud Torah schools.

Religious schools came directly under the jurisdiction of the community. Their level of instruction was low, so eventually a unified and improved system was introduced in which Hebrew became only a subject matter.

During the Second World War, the Italian authorities closed down all religious schools. A study conducted in 1943 revealed that in the previous three years, only 1500 of the 6000 Jewish children of school age had received formal instruction.<sup>3</sup>

4. *Socio-Economic Conditions.* Until recently, the economic resources of Libya were meagre, especially after the Mediterranean ports lost their prominence to the ports on the Atlantic. The Jews in Libya, however, maintained their dominance over the country's trade.<sup>4</sup> They also constituted the bulk of the country's handicraftsmen and government employees.

The majority of the Jews were better off than the remaining Libyan population but they were not wealthy. One

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(3) Landshut, p. 89.

(4) Many were peddlers who bought merchandise from the craftsmen and sold it to the inhabitants in rural areas.

third of Jewish city dwellers were of the middle and lower middle class; a number were poor. In the cities, Jews had become more and more Europeanized but elsewhere, particularly in the countryside, they were hardly distinguishable from the remaining Arab inhabitants.<sup>5</sup>

The Libyan society was predominantly a tribal one. The majority of the population lived from herding and farming. As is commonly the case in tribal societies, other forms of employment were held in contempt. Inevitably, the traditional exploitation by the merchant in such societies which live from the land bred hostility, but never to the extent that it disrupted communications. After all, the landlord might hate and despise the merchant but he cannot manage without him. Thus, the Jews in Libya lived under relatively peaceful conditions until the establishment of the State of Israel.

## B. *CONDITIONS FROM 1939-1951*

1. *Second World War.* During the war, the Italian authorities reversed their policy towards Jews, particularly those with foreign origins. Jews were accused of collaborating with the Allies and harsh repressive measures were applied against them. Naturally, the Jews in Libya welcomed the Allied forces which occupied the country in 1943, especially when they discovered Jewish troops from Palestine accompanying the British Army.<sup>6</sup>

The British occupying authorities immediately set about normalizing the status of the Jewish community. The Zionist

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(5) Landshut, p. 89.

(6) *Jewish Agency Report*, p. 384.

movement also set about spreading its ideology, profiting by the political and socio-economic situation. Libyans watched with concern certain aspects of the Zionist activities such as the establishment of Zionist militant clubs and Zionist boy scouts, and the appearance of Zionist slogans and flags in the streets. They demanded that the British authorities put a stop to such activities and withdraw the Jewish forces.

Violence broke out twice: in 1945 during a demonstration in memory of the Balfour Declaration and in 1948 when highly enthusiastic Libyans were angered by the disrespectful behavior some Jews exhibited while 400 Tunisian volunteers were passing through Tripoli on their way to Palestine.<sup>7</sup>

In spite of the growing political tensions between the Muslims and the Jews in Libya, there were Libyan Jews who considered themselves an integral part of the Libyan people. They joined the National Front which was seeking independence for a unified Libya and they were officially represented on the Executive Committee. Libyan Jewish leaders called upon all concerned to resort to peace and emphasized that they considered pro-Palestinian activities in the land to be directed against Zionism.<sup>8</sup> On the whole, these people who had a stake in the country belonged to the upper income bracket. The less privileged majority saw no reason why they should not seek better living conditions elsewhere. Thus, the Jewish Agency Office which was conducting the necessary arrangements to send people to Israel became the recognized Jewish meeting place in Libya.

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(7) Landshut, p. 91.

(8) Schechtman, p. 137.



## C. CONDITIONS AFTER INDEPENDENCE 1951

Under the Libyan constitution, all citizens are equal. They have equal civil and political rights, equal opportunities and equal duties, irrespective of religion, sect, race or language (Article 11, Chapter II). The Libyan government guarantees for everybody freedom of worship and freedom of thought (Article 21). The constitution guarantees also the right of every minority to pursue its own culture — Article 192 stipulates that the state must respect the statutes of non-Muslim communities in matters of personal status.

After independence, Jews retained their influence on the country's economy; they continued to control 90 percent of the Libyan commercial sector.<sup>9</sup> The Jewish religious council still held jurisdiction over the internal affairs of the community, except for the function of tax collection which the government took over. An independent observer described the economic conditions of the Jews as excellent.<sup>10</sup> Yet by 1958, a total of 35,142 persons had arrived in Israel from Libya.

In 1967 the Libyan government took measures to protect foreigners, Jews included. Those who wished to leave were granted exit visas along with reentry visas valid for six months. About 2,500 persons, mostly foreign businessmen, left for Italy. By the end of July, 1967 conditions were back to normal and Jews abroad began to express their hope in returning.<sup>11</sup>

Simultaneously, however, certain business activities con-

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(9) *Jewish Chronicle* (30 April 1954).

(10) *Jewish Chronicle* (6 February 1959).

(11) For details, see *Institute of Jewish Affairs* (June 1967 and August 1967).

ducted by Jews began to draw the attention of the authorities. Jews began to conduct transactions for which they received payments in foreign currency abroad. The Central Bank of Libya found itself called upon to warn citizens not to enter into any deal with a Jewish party which involved such a manner of payment.<sup>12</sup>

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(12) The Libyan *Al-Yawm* (21 September 1968).

## VIII

### JEWS OF TUNISIA

#### A. CONDITIONS BEFORE 1956

1. *Historical Note.* Jews have inhabited Tunisia throughout its history, frequently as refugees and traders from Europe. They enjoyed full religious freedom, they participated in the economy of the country, and they held high posts in the government.<sup>1</sup>

Under the Tunisian constitutions ('Ahd al-Aman) of 1857 and 1861, Tunisian Jews were granted equal rights with the Muslims, in addition to the autonomy they enjoyed as a community under the Millah system. Article 12 guaranteed for all Tunisians, irrespective of creed, full religious, civil and economic rights.<sup>2</sup>

During the French Protectorate over Tunisia (1881-1934), the French authorities maintained the status quo although Jews expressed their desire to acquire French citizenship in order to profit from the privileges granted to foreign residents. It was not until 1923, after large numbers of Tunisian Jews enlisted in the French Army during World War I, that a law was passed facilitating for Tunisian Jews the acquisition of French citizenship. However, contrary to what happened in Algeria as we shall see, the Tunisian Jews maintained

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(1) Chouraqui, pp. 158-59; and Nichola Zyadeh, *Tunis fi 'Abd al-Himaya 1881-1934* [Tunisia under the protectorate], (Cairo, 1963), pp. 173 and 175.

(2) Chouraqui, pp. 164-65.

the integrity of their community structure.<sup>3</sup>

2. *Socio-Economic Conditions.* The 1921 census put the number of Tunisian Jews at 48,436. In 1951 the total number of Jews in Tunisia rose to approximately 105,000. Thus Jews came to form 3.23 percent of the total population and 31.8 percent of the total European inhabitants.<sup>4</sup>

The 1946 census indicated that 20 percent of Tunisian Jews were employed. Nearly half of those were industrial laborers. One third engaged in trade or were employed by private concerns (banks, hotels, etc.), 9 percent were professionals, and the remaining 12 percent were government employees.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike Jews in other Arab and Islamic countries, some Tunisian Jews engaged in farming in the mountainous areas along the Algerian borders. Such families as al-Darmounis, the Barouchs, the Haddads and al-Tayyibs, owned vast agricultural tracts.<sup>6</sup>

Jews lived mainly in the big cities, 61 percent in Tunis alone. As the Jewish city-dwellers became Westernized they moved away from the traditional Jewish way of life. In the past decades members of the middle and upper socio-economic strata have gone to the extent of acquiring foreign nationalities. The less developed inhabitants of the south of the country, of Medenine and Tathouine, still clung to their Jewish way of life.<sup>7</sup>

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(3) Chouraqui, pp. 165-71.

(4) Schechtman, p. 311.

(5) Chouraqui, pp. 220-22.

(6) The Syrian daily *Al-Thawra* (4 August 1969).

(7) C. Haddad, "Jewish Role in the New Tunisian Democracy," *World Jewry* (June 1958), p. 14.

3. *Education and Cultural Life.* The causes for the above-mentioned social changes lay partly in education. Jewish children were more favored than Muslim children in that greater opportunities for going to school were available to them. The Alliance Israélite Universelle started its network of schools in Tunisia as early as 1863. Jewish children profited also from the public school system which the French authorities established under the Protectorate.

In 1946, an estimated 19,000<sup>8</sup> Jewish children of school age were receiving formal instruction, 15,000 of whom were attending public schools. The remaining 4000 were going to Talmud Torah, Chedrim and Ozar Hatorah schools.

It should be noted that unlike the case in Algeria, religious education remained more prevalent in Tunisia. In addition, religious instruction and topics such as Hebrew and Jewish history were offered in special classes for children who were receiving a French secular education in the public school system.

Jewish children profited further by the vocational training centers (2-3 years) operated by the Organization of Rehabilitation through Training (ORT). In 1956, for example, 2508 students were attending these centers. Graduates were employed at rates higher than the average pay of the Muslim Tunisian worker.<sup>9</sup>

These wide opportunities raised the percentage of qualified Jews but it deprived them of familiarity with Arabic and

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(8) According to Sati' al-Husari, in 1949, 23 percent of Jewish children were outside elementary schools, as compared to 47 percent of European non-French children and 87 percent of Muslim children of school age. *Al-Thaqaafa Monthly*, Vols. II and V.

(9) *Jewish Chronicle* (13 May 1960).

alienated them from Arab culture. French-educated Tunisian Jews were faced with large problems when independent Tunisia made Arabic the official language of the State and the main language of instruction in public schools.<sup>10</sup>

### B. CONDITIONS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Apparently the majority of Jews who had preferred to remain neutral during the negotiations for independence, eventually reached some sort of agreement with the Doustour Party leadership.<sup>11</sup> The acts of violence which had at times been directed against Jewish property during the years of Tunisian struggle for independence had been part of the general violence directed against French domination, and had often been generated by the strong ties of loyalty by which many Jews had been linked to France, similar to the situation in Algeria and Morocco.<sup>12</sup>

After independence, Jews held important posts in the government. Albert Bassis and André Barouche, prominent members of the National Front, held ministerial posts.<sup>13</sup> Jewish candidates in the Tunisian municipal elections of 1960 drew attention to the new opportunities opened to Jews enabling them to participate in the political and economic development of the country.<sup>14</sup>

The new regime sought, for its part, to remove the old distinctions between the Jewish minority and the Muslim ma-

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(10) Schechtman, p. 316.

(11) Schechtman, pp. 313-15.

(12) Lilienthal, *Other Side of the Coin*, p. 40.

(13) Schechtman, pp. 315 and 317.

(14) Chouraqui, p. 267.

jority which the French had reinforced so diligently in order to facilitate their domination over the country. The newly independent government decided to integrate them into the life of the country, while allowing for the maintenance of the Jewish character in matters pertaining to their faith.<sup>15</sup> As a first step towards abolishing all impediments which would otherwise hamper a unified legislation, the Jewish religious courts and councils in the cities were abolished; instead religious committees were formed whose functions were limited to matters of worship and religious instruction. This move had the further advantage of limiting the activities of the foreign Jewish organizations operating in Tunisia which were culturally non-Tunisian oriented.<sup>16</sup>

A number of Tunisian Jewish leaders approved of the efforts of the government to reconcile between religious freedom and the ideas of national cohesiveness and sovereignty.<sup>17</sup> The World Jewish Council kept in touch with the Tunisian government so as to discuss the conditions of Jews in Tunisia.<sup>18</sup>

### C. EMIGRATION AFTER 1956

After 1956, Tunisia witnessed a continuous outflow of its Jewish inhabitants. Between 1956 (the year of the Tripartite aggression against Egypt) and 1959, around 40,000 Jews, or 40 percent of the total Jewish population, left the

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(15) Haddad, p. 14; and *Jewish Chronicle* (19 July 1957, 25 July 1958).

(16) Schechtman, p. 319.

(17) Haddad, p. 15; Schechtman, p. 319; and *Jewish Chronicle* (15 February 1957, 1 September 1961).

(18) *Jewish Chronicle* (31 March 1961).

country. Of the 63,609 who remained, 50,000 lived in Tunis, the capital.<sup>19</sup> By 1963, 32,000 still remained and by 1967, only 20,000 were left in the country.<sup>20</sup> Why did these people leave?

Most Jews in Tunisia were merchants. The decrease in profitable trade which accompanied the early period in independence (due to poor harvests, population increase, the outflow of capital and government regulations) affected the economic position of the merchant class. Furthermore, the removal of the privileges which Jews had enjoyed under the French Protectorate, the competition of the rising national Muslim bourgeoisie and the Arabization of the administrative and educational systems placed additional limits on the scope of activities which had been previously open to them.<sup>21</sup>

Here, as elsewhere in North Africa, Tunisian Jews from the upper socio-economic strata preferred to emigrate to France (60,000 persons)<sup>22</sup> while the less developed economically responded to the Zionist call and went to Israel.<sup>23</sup>

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(19) Schechtman, p. 324.

(20) P. Alon, *Arab Racialism* (Jerusalem, 1964), p. 64. The unequivocal stand the Tunisian authorities adopted regarding the incidents against Jews of 5 June 1967, the firm measures they took to prevent their recurrence and the severe sentences (up to twenty years imprisonment, *Economist*, 6 April 1968) which the Tunisian courts passed against the angry demonstrators responsible for the said incidents alleviated the anxieties of Tunisian Jews. Thus, in the wake of the June war, not more than 3,500 Jews left the country.

(21) *Herald Tribune* (9 March 1965); and Schechtman, pp. 316 and 321.

(22) *Herald Tribune* (9 March 1965).

(23) Schechtman, p. 324.



## IX

### JEWS OF ALGERIA

#### A. *CONDITIONS DURING THE FRENCH OCCUPATION*

1. *Population.* Jews had existed in Algeria possibly since the destruction of the Second Temple. Their numbers increased with converts to Judaism in pre-Islamic times and with the waves of immigrants the majority of whom came from Spain in the fifteenth century and from Europe in the nineteenth century. In 1851 an estimated 21,000 Jews lived in Algeria. The number rose to 74,000 in 1930 and 140,000 in 1951 (or 12.7 percent of the total European population).<sup>1</sup> Until independence two to four thousand lived in the Sahara in primitive conditions similar to those of the remaining indigenous population. No Jews lived in the Berber districts due to age-old factors stemming from the competition between the two groups over the same trade.<sup>2</sup>

2. *Legal Status.* When the country fell under French occupation in 1830, the Jewish inhabitants began to enjoy many privileges which raised them above the rest of the Algerian population. They were granted an autonomous administration while the Muslims came under direct French administration.<sup>3</sup>

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(1) Chouraqui, p. 186.

(2) Chouraqui, pp. 190-92.

(3) Chouraqui, pp. 140-52.

In 1833, however, steps were taken towards a policy of integration. Gradually, the status of Algerian Jews became similar to that of the Jews in France. In 1870 B. Cremieux, the Minister of the Interior, passed a decree granting all Algerian Jews French citizenship. Thus Algerian Jews enjoyed all the rights of French citizens while the Muslims were French subjects.

This factor gave Algerian Jews a large role in the political life of the country. The sizable "Jewish vote" caused the various French political parties to compete for it. The percentage of Jews in government offices was higher than their rate to the rest of the population. Moreover, they enjoyed a strong economic position. Ironically, Algerian Muslims did not resent the granting of French citizenship to Jews. But European settlers who looked down upon Jews maintained a steady anti-Jewish campaign for three-quarters of a century, their newspapers raising the slogan "*à bas les Juifs*" (down with the Jews).<sup>4</sup>

In contrast, when the Vichy Regime (1940) repealed the Cremieux Decree and removed Jews from their posts, etc., Messali al-Hajj and Abbas Farhat refused to support these measures and objected to the attempts of certain French circles to draw the Muslims into a Muslim-Jewish conflict.<sup>5</sup>

3. *Education.* Since Jews in Algeria were French citizens, the Alliance Israélite Universelle did not open schools in that country. But the non-sectarian nature of the French education system created a strong tendency among the products of this

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(4) Schechtman, p. 328.

(5) Chouraqui, pp. 152, 155.

system to be assimilated in the French community and to lose their Jewish identity.<sup>6</sup> Whereas in the south of the country religious instruction continued to be given in Yeshivas, and Chedarim.<sup>7</sup>

The rate of Jewish children in schools was higher than their percentage to the rest of the population (of which they formed 1.75 percent in 1951). The 1941 census indicates that Jewish students formed 7 percent of the total student population in the elementary and intermediary levels, 12.9 percent in the secondary level, 37 percent in the School of Medicine, 26.4 percent in the School of Law, 17.4 percent in the School of Pharmacy and 16.8 percent in the School of Arts.<sup>8</sup>

4. *Socio-Economic Conditions.* The Jews' role in the Algerian economy was more important than that played by any other North African Jewish community. They owed their economic position to the French influence prevalent amongst them because of their French citizenship. It followed also that their social conditions were more developed than those of their Jewish communities in that area.

According to the 1941 census, 85 percent of the Jews in Algeria were employed. Of these 30 percent were engaged in business. Jews were prominent in the following industries: clothing and textiles (al-Casba was the center of the textile industry), leather and wood, precious metals and stones, food

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(6) For example, in Algiers there is one Talmud Torah School which is attended by three hundred students during the summer vacations, while at Talmasan the Talmud Torah School building stands empty.

(7) Schechtman, p. 327.

(8) Chouraqui, pp. 204-207.

and chemicals, public utilities, and the building industry. The Jewish bourgeoisie comprised also compradors, professionals and civil servants.<sup>9</sup>

The important position the Jews held in the Algerian economy, their political importance and their knowledge of French and Arabic placed them in a middle position between the European settlers and the Muslim Arabs.

### B. *JEWSH ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT*

When the National Liberation Front (FLN) led the struggle for Algeria's independence from French domination, the attitude of the Jewish minority was ambiguous in many respects. The Jewish community was careful not to thrust itself into the existing political issues. In 1956, the annual congress of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Algeria, recommended that all Jews, belonging as they did to a religious minority, be on guard against all provocation. It also called upon all Jewish organizations abroad to avoid any public statements relating to the future of North African Jews.<sup>10</sup> This, of course, did not prevent individual Jews from expressing their views: some did not hesitate to state publicly that they considered their fate to be tied directly to the French presence in Algeria<sup>11</sup> while a few intellectuals from the left leaned towards the Arab cause and established strong ties with the nationalist elements in Algeria.<sup>12</sup>

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(9) Chouraqui, pp. 217-220.

(10) Schechtman, p. 332.

(11) *Jewish Chronicle* (11 July 1958).

(12) *Jewish Chronicle* (16 February 1962).

For its part, the FLN did not cease to urge Algerian Jews to take a stand and share in the struggle for an independent Algeria.<sup>13</sup> Throughout its years of struggle, the FLN continued to declare that it did not recognize the Cremieux Decree and that it looked upon Algerian Jews who had inhabited the land for two millenia as part of the Algerian nation.<sup>14</sup>

As the FLN gained in strength, Jews who had remained on the fence began to feel anxious over their future. The Arab boycott of all European institutions also affected Jewish concerns which fell into this category.<sup>15</sup> European extremists and Zionist organizations seized the opportunity to sow the seeds of discord. Some observers of the Algerian scene believed that the extremists among the European settlers would be happy to see Muslim-Jewish relations deteriorate to the point of bloodshed so that Jews would throw in their lot with that of the Europeans.<sup>16</sup>

This explains why 90 percent of the Jews of Algeria were in favor of the continuation of French presence and why some sided with the Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS).<sup>17</sup>

### C. EMIGRATION AFTER 1955

French settlers began leaving Algeria in 1955, the year the Algerian revolt broke out. The European exodus gained

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(13) Schechtman, pp. 330 and 333; and *Jewish Chronicle* (11 July 1958, 16 February 1962, and 29 June 1962).

(14) *Jewish Chronicle* (21 November 1958, 12 February 1960, 3 March 1961, and 6 May 1961).

(15) Schechtman, pp. 331-332.

(16) *Jewish Chronicle* (16 February 1962).

(17) *Jewish Chronicle* (12 February 1960).

momentum especially in the wake of the violence initiated by the OAS on the eve of independence.<sup>18</sup>

An estimated half million settlers left between December 1961 and Independence Day (July 1962).<sup>19</sup> But while one fourth of the Europeans in Algeria had left by that date, half of all resident Jews had left also.<sup>20</sup> By June 1962, 400,000 Jews are said to have left Algeria. The figure is not exact because, as French citizens, Jews entered France without official documents.

Several factors led Jews to leave Algeria with the French. First, they had linked their fate to such an extent with the French rule that many felt they had no alternative but to leave with the French administration. Second, they feared the difficulties and obstacles that the Algerian nationalist leaders might place in their way as an answer to the Jewish ultimate pro-French stand after their long hesitation to join the Algerian Liberation Movement.<sup>21</sup>

Yet few of those who left went to Israel in spite of all the Zionist efforts to induce them to settle there. In 19 November 1962, *Hirout* wrote:

The efforts of the Immigration and Settlement Office of the Jewish Agency to induce the Jews of Algeria who had immigrated to France to go to Israel came to nought. Of the 130,000 Algerian Jews, only a minimal number emigrated to Israel. Israel is directing its efforts towards having France guarantee that the

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(18) *Jewish Chronicle* (16 February 1962).

(19) Chouraqui, p. 274.

(20) Lilienthal, *Other Side of the Coin*, p. 46.

(21) *Jewish Chronicle* (29 June 1962).

indemnities due to the refugees from Algeria be given to those who emigrate to Israel.

André Chouraqui emphasizes that 99 percent of the Algerian Jewish emigrants of 1962 chose to settle in France where conditions were not only more favorable than in Israel but also more familiar. Those who preferred to travel to Israel came mostly from the hinterland where they had remained culturally close to the indigenous population and consequently felt they would be more at home among Israel's Oriental inhabitants.<sup>22</sup>

About 3,800 Jews, mostly professionals, still live in Algeria.<sup>23</sup>

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(22) Chouraqui, p. 289; *Jewish Chronicle* (24 August 1962); and Lilienthal, p. 46.

(23) *Jewish Chronicle* (11 October 1963).





## X

### JEWS OF MOROCCO

#### A. *CONDITIONS BEFORE 1956*

1. *Historical Note.* Jewish history in Morocco is characterized by a succession of immigrant waves starting possibly in the third century B.C. and continuing through modern times. The early Jews were either refugees from Palestine after the destruction of the Temple of Solomon, or Berber tribes converted to Judaism during the Roman and Byzantine rules. Later immigrants came from Spain after the fall of the Arab rule there, and from France, Italy and central Europe at a still later date. These European Jews settled mostly in the northern cities and maintained close commercial ties with all parts of the world.

Under the French Protectorate 1912-1956, Moroccan Jews were not granted French citizenship but they enjoyed wide privileges. France tried, furthermore, to build the Jewish community into a separate force that would act as a buffer between her and her Muslim subjects. Thus at the end of fifty years of French presence, Morocco's Jews found themselves alienated from the Muslim society on whose perimeter they lived.<sup>1</sup>

2. *Population.* No exact statistics about the number of Jews in Morocco existed until 1947 when Jews in the French

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(1) See Chouraqui, pp. 173-175.

Zone<sup>2</sup> were estimated at 203,839 persons, or 2.36 percent of the total population.<sup>3</sup> By 1951, they numbered 225,000.<sup>4</sup>

Eighty percent of all Jews lived in urban centers where they constituted 9 percent of the total urban population. Nearly one third lived in Casablanca and one fourth in Marrakesh.

An estimated 45 percent of Moroccan Jews were of Arab-Berber origins, 13 percent were of Hebrew-Aramaic origins, 17 percent were descendants of Latin immigrants and 4 percent were descendants of later German immigrants.<sup>5</sup>

3. *Socio-Economic Conditions.* From the seventeenth century until the advent of the European colonists, Moroccan Jews constituted the commercial and industrial mainstay of the Moroccan economy.

The 1947 census indicated that 61,164 Jews in Morocco were employed (or 30.4 percent of all Jewish residents). Of these 46.5 percent engaged in commerce, 36.1 percent engaged in skilled work, 7.5 percent were professionals and white collar workers and 4.01 percent engaged in agriculture.<sup>6</sup>

One important point should be kept well in mind. Though the socio-economic conditions of the Jews of Morocco were better than those of the Muslim population, they were on the whole considerably unsatisfactory. Apart from the privileged few who shared with the European élite vast wealth and

(2) Morocco is divided into three zones: the Spanish Zone, the International Zone of Tangiers and the French Zone which now forms the Moroccan Kingdom.

(3) A. Ruppin estimates that 175,000 Jews lived in Morocco in 1927; Chouraqui, p. 186.

(4) Schechtman, p. 271; a further 14,195 lived in the Spanish Zone and 20,000 in the International Zone.

(5) See Schechtman, p. 271.

(6) Of these, 1,493 were landowners. Most figures are taken from Chouraqui, pp. 223-226.

power, the rest owned hardly anything but their labor<sup>7</sup> and the tools of their craft. For example, the large number of traders given above includes the "army of Jewish peddlers who acted as intermediary between importers and wholesalers and Moslem consumers."<sup>8</sup>

The majority of Jews lived in the *Mellahs* or Jewish quarters, in terribly overcrowded and highly unsanitary dwellings. Yet the Jews in Morocco were luckier than most of their Muslim neighbors. Jewish philanthropic organizations, both local and foreign, as well as the government, started vast programs aimed at improving the sanitary, cultural and social levels of, particularly, the inhabitants of the *Mellahs*.<sup>9</sup>

4. *Education.* One of the major factors which contributed towards the improvement of the conditions of life for the Moroccan Jews was the introduction of modern education. The Alliance Israélite Universelle opened its first school at Tetuan in 1862. Until the beginning of the French domination, its schools offered teaching facilities to most Jewish children of school age.<sup>10</sup> Later, Jewish children profited by the free public school system and attended what was known

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(7) Schechtman, p. 275.

(8) Chouraqui, p. 130; he adds that "at the end of the nineteenth century there were perhaps three wealthy families in Marrakesh — the Corcos, the Drakis and the Trudjman . . ." p. 133.

(9) The most famous were the Society for the Protection of Jewish Health (OSE), the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJD), the ORT, the Central British Fund, the Rehabilitation Fund for Jewish Relief. For details see *Jewish Chronicle* (9 August 1957, 16 January 1959, 8 July 1960, 9 June 1961, 27 September 1963, 21 June 1963, 4 October 1963, and 25 September 1964).

(10) During the French Protectorate, four-fifths of these schools' expenses were reimbursed by the Moroccan authorities.

as the Franco-Israelite schools. In addition they were offered vocational training at ORT schools.<sup>11</sup>

These children were instructed also in Hebrew and in religious subjects. In 1940, the Alliance Israélite schools introduced Hebrew and Jewish culture in their programs,<sup>12</sup> and in 1944 Ozar Hatorah schools began operating in Morocco. There were also Lubavitcher Yeshivas.

The 1947 census indicated that 25,560 Jewish students received instruction, or 12.53 percent of the total Jewish population as compared to Muslim students who formed 1.08 percent and European students who formed 16.8 percent of the total Muslim and European populations respectively.<sup>13</sup>

#### B. *POLITICAL AND PUBLIC LIFE FROM 1956-1967*

Jewish leaders at home and abroad had come to an agreement with the Moroccan nationalist leaders over the future of Morocco's Jewry. For example, in December 1955, a Jewish delegation headed by Mayer Toledono from Casablanca conducted negotiations at Aix-le-Bain (while the Franco-Moroccan talks were being held) upon which they came over to the side of Moroccan independence. They had received satisfactory

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(11) *Jewish Chronicle* (9 June 1961).

(12) Before that, the Alliance Israélite had been content to leave religious instruction to the local Talmud Torah schools. After the war the organization became so interested in the instruction of these topics that it established a Hebrew Normal in Casablanca to train Hebrew teachers; Schechtman, p. 278.

(13) Sati' al-Husari, *Al-Thaqaafa al-Arabiyya Monthly*, Second Year (Cairo, 1952), pp. 578-581. Schechtman says that in 1957-58, 40,000 Jewish children were in school or 100 percent of Jewish children of school age, p. 279.

assurances that Jews would be considered as an integral part of the Moroccan population and that they would be guaranteed equal rights with the Muslims in a modern democratic state.<sup>14</sup>

Under the newly independent regime, Morocco's Jews began to participate in the public and political life of the country more than they had ever done before, even under the French Protectorate.<sup>15</sup> In addition to ministerial positions, a large number of qualified Moroccan Jews, familiar with foreign languages, were now holding senior administrative posts.<sup>16</sup> M. Obadia, who later became the head of the Jewish community in Casablanca, declared in a press conference that 15 percent of the top level positions in the Administration were held by Jews and that Jewish judges tried cases in which both Muslims and Jews appeared.<sup>17</sup>

Under the new regime, Morocco's Jews exercised their right to vote, not as a distinct minority as they used to do under the Protectorate, but as free citizens.

In the first general elections (1960), the Jews in Casablanca supported the National Federation of Popular Forces, which gained 43 out of 51 seats in the Parliament. The Muslim and Jewish voters alike supported the Jewish candidates

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(14) Schechtman, pp. 284-285.

(15) *Jewish Chronicle* (13 May 1957).

(16) For example, the director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the director of metal production, the Economic Attaché at the Moroccan Embassy in Washington, the head of the civil section in the Supreme Court, etc., were Jews. See *Jewish Chronicle* (13 May 1957, 21 June 1963, 29 January 1965); Schechtman, p. 286; and Ben-Aboud, pp. 6-7.

(17) *Jewish Chronicle* (3 February 1958).

on the electoral lists.<sup>18</sup> While in the second general elections, Casablanqan Muslim and Jewish support swung to an Istiqlal Party sympathizer, M. Obadia.<sup>19</sup> The first municipal and rural elections resulted in the victory of 15 Jewish candidates in the cities.<sup>20</sup> Eleven others were elected in the same year to the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, also in the major cities.<sup>21</sup> In the following elections (1963), a number of Jewish candidates had their terms renewed.<sup>22</sup>

The existence of close ties between the Jewish citizens and the Moroccan state and the absence of any discrimination against Jews were evident in other fields. Jewish delegations visited the Royal Palace and were always received cordially.<sup>23</sup> The Jewish youth participated in building the highway linking the north of the country to the south through the Rif Mountains.<sup>24</sup> The Israelite League basketball team represented Morocco in the European Basketball championship.<sup>25</sup>

For their part Jewish leaders extolled the cooperation between Jew and Muslim. They saw it as a practical and fruitful achievement and called upon members of the Jewish community to make further efforts towards integrating themselves in the Moroccan society in order to become "Moroccan

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(18) Schechtman, p. 310.

(19) M. Obadia won by 17,189 votes, half were from Muslims; *Jewish Chronicle* (21 June 1963).

(20) *Jewish Chronicle* (3 June 1960).

(21) *Jewish Chronicle* (13 May 1960).

(22) *Jewish Chronicle* (26 September 1963).

(23) There were Jewish officials employed at the palace; see Bashan, p. 8.

(24) *Jewish Chronicle* (12 July 1957).

(25) *Jewish Chronicle* (6 July 1962).

citizens of the Jewish faith."<sup>26</sup> Members of the Jewish intelligentsia and the professions formed in 1956 a league called al-Wifaq (unity). The league called for the introduction of Arabic in Jewish schools, the abolition of sectarianism in education, the integration of schools, the Moroccanization of foreign Jewish organizations and the limitation of the functions of the Jewish community councils to spiritual matters.<sup>27</sup>

In view of the conditions described above, why was Morocco the subject of such strong Zionist attacks and why did the emigration of its Jewish citizens take such a wide and serious dimension?

### C. ZIONIST ACTIVITY AND EMIGRATION

Prior to 1947-48 there was a minimum of Zionist activity which took the form of sending delegates to Zionist congresses and collecting funds for the Palestine Foundation Fund.<sup>28</sup> Yet, between 1919 and 1947 less than 1000 Moroccan Jews migrated to Palestine. When the fighting broke out in Palestine in 1948, the Moroccan scene remained calm.<sup>29</sup>

Gradually, however, agents of the Zionist Agency began to infiltrate among the Moroccan Jewish population spurring people to emigrate to Israel, spreading favorable propaganda about the conditions of life there, and sowing the seeds of anxiety over the future of Jews living in Arab countries. Response was not uniform. The pro-French upper socio-

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(26) *Jewish Chronicle* (3 February 1958).

(27) *Jewish Chronicle* (13 June 1958); and Schechtman, p. 286.

(28) *Jewish Chronicle* (8 June 1962).

(29) Chouraqui, p. 181.

economic strata were cool. Those who presented themselves at the various Zionist emigration offices in the major cities were small shopowners, handicraftsmen and workers.<sup>30</sup> In the period between the establishment of Israel and the end of 1949, 18,000 Moroccan Jews arrived in Israel.

But when Morocco gained its independence in 1956, the country saw an intensification of Zionist efforts to step up the process of Jewish mass emigration to Israel.<sup>31</sup> After two millenia of Jewish presence in Morocco, thousands of Jews preferred to leave with the French authorities. The reasons for this mass exodus, according to André Chouraqui, went deeper than the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Jews, those from the lower socio-economic strata in particular, feared that once their privileged position which had been based on defacto discrimination by the French authorities against the Muslims was removed, they would fall back to the level of the Muslim masses.<sup>32</sup> Zionist organizations exploited their anxiety and aggravated it by carrying out intense anti-Arab propaganda amongst them. Thus the poorer Jews were the first to leave. But because they lacked the means, they accepted the aid these organizations proffered and went to Israel. Equally important was the factor of alienation. French secular education and identification with the French colonialists had so removed Morocco's educated Jews from their Moroccan roots (often their Jewish roots as well), that they

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(30) Schechtman, p. 288. The names of the sick and the aged were crossed out from the lists of emigrants, adds Schechtman. The percentage of Moroccan emigrants of working age was the highest among all the other Afro-Asian emigrants to Israel, p. 290.

(31) Schechtman, pp. 292, 293, 296 and 297.

(32) Schechtman, p. 283.



could not see themselves living under Moroccan sovereignty. Nor would they accept the Arabization of the State.<sup>33</sup>

Matters were complicated further by the reaction of nationalist elements against this Jewish mass exodus. Partly in response to anti-Moroccan activities, partly in sympathy with the cause of the Palestinian people, such leaders as Allal al-Fasi (leader of al-Istiqlal Party) bore pressure on the government to halt Zionist activities in the country and the emigration of Moroccan Jews.<sup>34</sup> Their press campaign did not always distinguish between Moroccan Jew and Moroccan Zionist.<sup>35</sup>

As for the Moroccan government, in collaboration with the nationalist Jewish elements,<sup>36</sup> it seized every opportunity to assure the members of its Jewish population that it looked upon them as citizens with the same rights as everyone else, and to call upon them to participate in building the country. At the same time, the Moroccan government made it clear that, as a sovereign state, Morocco could not permit any subversive activities on its own territories. In 1958, it banned the Zionist organization *Kadimah* and forbade Zionist sponsored emigration. This, of course, did not mean that individual Moroccan Jews could not travel; for to limit the freedom of movement of any citizen, the government believed, would be a violation of his human rights.<sup>37</sup>

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(33) Chouraqui, pp. 281-282.

(34) Schechtman, p. 301.

(35) Lilienthal, *Other Side of the Coin*, pp. 44-45.

(36) See the declaration signed by eighty Jewish leaders and intellectuals against the distribution of anti-Moroccan propaganda in February 1961; Ben-Aboud, p. 12.

(37) *Jewish Chronicle* (2 February 1959 and 13 March 1959).

In all, between 1948 and 1958 an estimated 45,000 Jews left Morocco, mostly for Israel and Latin America.<sup>38</sup> However, in 1958, 7,000 of those who had gone to Israel decided to return to Morocco.<sup>39</sup> Later, in 1961, when the Moroccan government lifted the ban on Jewish emigration, the mass exodus of Moroccan Jews was resumed.<sup>40</sup> Chouraqui says that in addition to the removal of restrictions by the new Moroccan king, the massive exodus from Algeria, which began about that time, contributed also towards the emigration of Moroccan Jews.<sup>41</sup>

#### D. CONDITIONS AFTER 1967

Fifty-five thousand Jews were living in Morocco<sup>42</sup> in normal conditions, mass exodus having long come to a stop, when the 1967 Arab-Israeli war broke out. The government took precautionary measures aimed at protecting its Jewish population in case troubles occurred. It sought also to stop the campaign conducted by the press for boycotting Jewish goods and services, since its Moroccan Jewish citizens had remained loyal to their country.<sup>43</sup>

Leading Jewish citizens urged their Moroccan coreli-

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(38) Jews of Spanish origin had retained much of the Arabic-Spanish culture prevalent in Spain prior to their exodus in the fourteenth century. Thus, they met no problems of adjustment in their new home. Not so the Moroccan Jews who settled in Israel where the Ashkenazi way of life prevails. Neville Barbour, *Jewish Chronicle* (13 June 1958).

(39) *Jewish Chronicle* (13 June 1958).

(40) See Lilienthal, *Other Side of the Coin*, pp. 41-44.

(41) Chouraqui, p. 288.

(42) *Institute of Jewish Affairs* (June 1967), p. 9.

(43) *Institute of Jewish Affairs* (August 1967), pp. 6-8.

gionists, to demonstrate their solidarity with their compatriots in every way possible so as to combat Zionist influence among Moroccan Jews.<sup>44</sup>

Two years later, according to the *New York Times* (30 June 1969), 45,000 Jews still lived in Morocco. The newspaper quoted Mr. Lazare Conquy, a previous headmaster of a Jewish school, as saying that Morocco was unique in its stand vis-à-vis the Jewish minority. For discrimination by the authorities against Jews is non-existent.

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(44) The Lebanese daily *Al-Muharrer* (19 August 1967); and *Institute of Jewish Affairs* (August 1967), p. 8.



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